

From the London Quarterly Review.

1. *La Fontaine et ses Fables*. Par H. Taine. 1861. Paris: Hachette. 12mo.
2. *La Fontaine et ses Devanciers: Histoire de l'Apologue*. 1860. Paris: Durand. 8vo.

LE BON LA FONTAINE! Notorious for his immorality,\* his indelicacy, the looseness of his principles, and the licentiousness of some of his works, this man received from his contemporaries the qualification of *good*; and posterity—French posterity, we mean—has ratified the dictum. We immediately think of other writers, or public characters, who at various times have been classed in the same category: Henry of Navarre, Mathurin Régnier, Michel de Montaigne: the list is a long one, beginning with *le bon roi Dagobert*. We run through the whole catalogue and we come to the conclusion that, amongst our neighbours, a certain joviality of disposition, good nature and kindness, mixed up with a certain amount of sensibility, personal courage, and wit, have always formed a cloak more than ample enough to conceal wickedness of the deepest dye. '*La bonne loi naturelle*' is the motto of these popular heroes: and what is the law of nature, but that of unregenerate man? We must, however, particularize our remarks; and, in doing so, we have selected for the subject of the present article, one of the stars of French literature during the seventeenth century; the one who, with Madame de Sévigné and Molière, has ever been considered as the most original writer of that epoch.

Jean de La Fontaine was born in 1621, at Château-Thierry, in Champagne. His education was very much neglected, and he gave when quite young evident proofs of the *laissezaller* which distinguished him through life, and of that susceptibility which made him continually yield, without an effort, to the impressions of the moment. A canon of Soissons having lent him a few works of a religious character, he read them

eagerly, fancied himself called to embrace the clerical profession, and entered a theological school. But his vocation did not last long: he left the church as easily as he had joined it, and, at his family's suggestion, contracted a matrimonial engagement: for this, however, as his subsequent conduct unfortunately proved, he was as little qualified, as for the duties of the sanctuary. A small but honourable office, transmitted to him by his father, would have enabled him to maintain in society a position in accordance with his birth and fortune. All these advantages he threw away most recklessly, and 'accustomed himself' to quote a modern critic, 'to live as if he had neither wife nor office.\*' He had not yet exhibited any signs of his talent for poetry, and it was a trivial circumstance which led him to cultivate literature. An officer, who was spending his winter-quarters at Château-Thierry, read aloud to him one day the famous ode of Malherbe, beginning with the following line,—

'Que direz vous, races futures,' . . .

and composed on the occasion of the attempt made to assassinate Henry IV. (December 19th, 1605.) The perusal of a book of edification had inspired La Fontaine with a few days' piety; on hearing a production of the favourite poet of the time impressively declaimed, he thought himself called by Heaven to emulate Pindar, and wrote off a few lyrics, which do not seem to have been particularly striking. One of his relatives, Pintrel, and his schoolfellow, Maucroix, dissuaded him from yielding to his new-fledged enthusiasm, and advised him to study the ancients, with a view to the improvement of his taste. He followed the recommendations of his friends; but, together with Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, he perused the more popular and attractive compositions of Rabelais, Marot, and the other writers of the sixteenth century. In the year 1654, he published a translation, in verse, of Terence's *Eunuchus*. Finally, Jannart, who was related to Madame de La Fontaine, and who en-

\* 'Sans rien perdre au fond du côté de l'esprit, il exposa aux regards de tous une vieilliesse cynique et dissolue mal déguisée sous les roses d'Anacréon.' — Sainte-Beuve.

\* Sainte-Beuve.

joyed the friendship of the celebrated Fouquet, took the young poet to Paris, and introduced him to the *Surintendant*.

This proved the turning-point in La Fontaine's career. He inscribed to Fouquet the poem of *Adonis*, which he had just finished, (1658,) and which afforded promise of much real talent.\* The next year the minister granted to his new *protégé* an annual pension of one thousand francs, on condition that each quarter's payment would be acknowledged by the poet with an original piece of his own composition. La Fontaine accepted at once the engagement; and, in an epistle which he addressed to Pellisson, expressed himself enthusiastically, and, no doubt, sincerely, as to his intention of discharging scrupulously his part of the contract:—

'Son souvenir qui me comble de joie,  
Sera payé tout en belle monnaie  
De madrigaux, d'ouvrages ayant cours.  
(Cela s'entend, sans manquer de deux jours  
Aux termes pris, ainsi que je l'espère.)'

The first instalment was due in July, 1659; it was paid punctually and liberally. A ballad, dedicated to Madame Fouquet, formed the handsome requital of her husband's munificence; and Pellisson, in his turn, acknowledged La Fontaine's effusion by a rhymed receipt, which strikes us as very much tainted with the affectation and mannerism which constituted what was called *le style précieux*. If Fouquet had known La Fontaine's disposition more accurately, he would have felt convinced that perseverance was not one of the poet's qualities. As October came on, a second 'set of lyrics' must be prepared. But, passionately fond as he was of idleness and sleep, La Fontaine had not the strength of mind necessary to make him sacrifice his ease to even the claims of gratitude. He composed only when the *afflatus* came upon him; he liked to select his own subjects, and could not write to order. The October ballad betrays therefore the weariness of a man who has nothing to say; it is witty here and there, but you can see that the poetry does not flow naturally, and that the author is anxious to have done. It was absolutely necessary that some extraordinary event should come to the relief of the unfortunate La Fontaine, otherwise the sources of his inspiration would be quite dried up before the first year of his laureate-ship was over. Very luckily, the

Peace of the Pyrenees was signed on the 7th of November, and it supplied the materials for the third ballad. To this La Fontaine added a madrigal, in honour of the queen; and, on the whole, we must say that he earned his pension very honourably. But, the end of this troublesome bondage was approaching. To sleep, to muse, to borrow from Boccaccio, Ariosto, or Machiavelli, some tale which he might begin, leave off, and finish exactly as his fancy suggested,—such was the only occupation that would suit La Fontaine. He became irregular in his accounts; the ballads dwindled away by degrees into the smallest possible epigrams, and these were always forwarded long after the appointed time. It is amusing to see how Pellisson endeavours to extenuate his friend's shortcomings, and to magnify his most trifling contributions into first-rate poems. If it had not been that the excessive love of *farniente* was really the cause of La Fontaine's want of punctuality towards Fouquet, we might have praised his spirit of independence, and compared his scorn for riches with the greediness of the half-starved poetasters, who, for the sake of a mere pittance, would have spun out epic poems unremittingly, from one year's end to the other. After allowing, however, as much as possible for La Fontaine's innate laziness, we must say that he possessed more of the true spirit of freedom than would at first sight be imagined. On one occasion, he had gone to Saint-Mandé, near Paris, for the purpose of having an audience of Fouquet. After waiting a long time in the *Surintendant's* library, he became impatient, got thoroughly out of temper, and left abruptly. The result of this visit was an epistle, in which the poet complains strongly of his patron's want of politeness.

Fouquet, we should say, could sympathize very cordially with La Fontaine's defects. Whilst the world, whilst La Fontaine himself, gave the minister credit for his unremittent attention to business, and for an amount of industry which was relieved by very little pleasure, he spent his time in reality amidst all the fascinations of beauty; and the people who crowded his ante-chambers, in order to obtain help or justice, little suspected that the minister was giving to debauchery the time he owed to the public.\* Fouquet, we repeat, soon understood

\* It is in the *Adonis* that we find the exquisite line:—

'Et la grâce plus belle encore que la beauté.'

\* Il se chargeait de tout, et prétendait être premier ministre sans perdre un instant de ses plaisirs. Il faisait semblant de travailler seul dans son cabinet de Saint-Mandé; et pendant que toute la cour, prévenue de sa future grandeur, était dans son anti-

the character of the poet; he released him from his obligations, whilst continuing to pay him the stipulated annuity; and the energy with which La Fontaine pleaded his patron's cause, when the days of adversity had come for the *Surintendant*, amply atoned for whatever neglect he had previously been guilty of. The well known elegy, inscribed to the *Nymphes de Vaux*, is admirable, because it is the outburst of genuine affection, mixed with indignation at the wickedness of those who persecuted Fouquet, and who concealed their private animosity under the specious pretence of anxiety for the public good. La Fontaine's efforts on behalf of his friend, repeated with unflagging energy, met, of course, with no success; and it is even supposed that his departure from Paris, during the year 1663, was really the result of a sentence of banishment, pronounced by Louis XIV.\*

If Fouquet was the first person who brought out La Fontaine's qualities as a poet, the second was the Duchess de Bouillon, Marie-Anne Mancini. The duke, her husband, had gone (1665) to serve under Montecuculi against the Turks; during his absence she left Paris, and kept a kind of court at Château-Thierry, which formed part of the estates of the Bouillon family. But only imagine how dull a little country town must be for a lady of high rank, accustomed to Paris and fashionable society. The change would have been intolerable, but for the unexpected appearance of La Fontaine; who, disheartened by the catastrophe of his protector, had, as we have said, abandoned Paris, and returned to his native place. Although he was then forty-four, his reputation was far from being established; he had only published a small volume, containing *Joconde*, *La Matrone d'Ephèse*, and a few short poems; some of his Fables had also received a kind of quasi-publicity. 'The introduction of La Fontaine to Madame de Bouillon proved advantageous for himself, whilst it brought out all his genius.'† His new friend encouraged him to compose his Fables, pointed out to him the road which best suited his talent, and often suggested even the various topics he should treat. Cardinal Mazarin had, it is said, turned his palace into a veritable ménagerie, where both he and his nieces lived in company with all sorts of animals;

so that La Fontaine found within his immediate reach ample subjects for observation. It was Madame de Bouillon who nicknamed him her *fablier*; she had found out the true nature of his intellectual superiority, and such was her influence that the *nonchalant* author published, two years after his first acquaintance with the duchess, the first six books of his Fables. If Marie-Anne Mancini had done nothing else in the way of suggestion, we could have no fault to find with her; but truth compels us to state that the objectionable tales, borrowed by La Fontaine from the *Decamerone*, and other Italian sources, were likewise written at the positive request of Madame de Bouillon, in order to enliven the dulness of the court of Château-Thierry.

When the Duke de Bouillon returned from the war against the Turks, he took his wife back to Paris, and with her went La Fontaine, who by this means was introduced to the other members of the Mazarin family, Madame de Soissons, \* Madame de Mazarin, † the Duke de Nevers, ‡ the Duke d'Albret, besides the illustrious persons whom interest, friendship, or community of tastes brought within the sphere of attraction of the Hotel Bouillon. Through the protection of Marie-Anne, our poet obtained a place as *gentilhomme de la chambre* to the Duchess of Orleans.

Molière, Corneille, Turenne, Grammont, the most celebrated generals, courtiers, and wits of the day, used to meet regularly at the Hotel Bouillon, which became one of the centres of fashion and taste. But what shall we say of the morality of those who could listen with pleasure to the brilliant descriptions of vice which were applauded there, and who could admire those famous paintings, which, elegant though they may have been, and irreproachable as masterpieces of style, only portrayed the corruption of our nature? Explain as we may the immorality of the *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, we cannot justify it; and the conversations of Madame de Longueville, Madame de la Vallière, and Maucroix, to name merely these three, serve to show the depths of iniquity which made such instances of moral revolution and complete newness of life, matters of almost daily occurrence. §

La Fontaine's peculiar vices found, we are sorry to say, every encouragement at the Hotel Bouillon, and the record of his actions during that epoch is such that we

chambre, louant à haute voix la travail infatigable de ce grand homme, il descendait par un escalier dérobé dans un petit jardin où ses nymphes venaient lui tenir compagnie. — Choisy, *Mémoires*.

\* Cf. Cheruel, *Mémoires sur Fouquet*, vol. II., p. 400.

† Am. Renée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin*, p. 360.

\* Olympe Mancini.

† Hortense Mancini.

‡ Philippe Mancini.

§ Am. Renée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin*, pp. 374, 375.

leave it entirely unnoticed. Let us only remark, that with his well-known hatred of court life and of attendance upon the great, our poet spent a considerable part of his time in châteaux and palaces. We have seen him with Fouquet at Saint-Mandé; he is now the favoured denizen of the Hotel Bouillon and of the Temple. And yet let us open his Fables, and see how strongly he denounces the restraints of grandeur, falsely so called.

'Je définis la cour un pays où les gens,  
Tristes, gais, prêts à tout, indifférents,  
Sont ce qu'il plaît au prince, ou, s'ils ne  
peuvent l'être,  
Tâchent au moins de la paraître;  
Peuple caméléon, peuple singe du maître:  
On dirait qu'un esprit anime mille corps;  
C'est bien là que les gens sont de simples res-  
sorts!'

To account for this apparent contradiction, we must remember a fact which explains the character of French society at the time about which we are now discoursing. At Versailles etiquette prevailed. Every hour in the day had its allotted occupation, and every thing was to be done 'decently and in order.' Religion then was part and parcel of the official programme, and, as such, its forms were scrupulously adhered to. Periwigs and knee-breeches, swords and gold lace, reduced to the same level all those who moved within that atmosphere, destroyed their originality, and transformed them into so many machines. But the greater the restraint at Versailles, the more complete the freedom elsewhere. Noblemen like the Prince de Condé and the Duc de Vendôme, shook off with violence the golden fetters which kept them captive, and retired to their own châteaux, where, in company with a few familiars, they rushed wildly into all sorts of indulgences. Decorum had been imposed upon them in Mansart's gorgeous drawing-rooms; they took their revenge by casting off even modesty elsewhere. Religion, or rather the externals of religion, had been scrupulously required from them; they made up for weary hours of state devotion by blasphemous orgies and open profaneness. Amongst such scenes La Fontaine was to be found. He did not object to lords and ladies, provided they allowed him what the French call 'ses coudees franches;' and they liked him for his wit, his eccentricities, his *bon-homme*, his vices. The tales he composed, the madrigals in which he celebrated Mazarin's niece

or Madame de Sévigné, imparted a kind of intellectual character to corruption and wickedness.

The death of the Duchess of Orleans deprived La Fontaine of an income which was absolutely necessary for his maintenance; he had long since squandered away the fortune he had inherited from his father, and would have been reduced to absolute penury, if a distinguished lady, Madame de la Sablière, had not most generously offered him in her own house a refuge, and the means of forgetting that there is such a thing in this world as the *res angusta domi*. He felt strongly so unexpected an act of kindness; and the respectful friendship which he henceforward entertained for Madame de la Sablière,—friendship which death alone terminated,—suggested the happiest efforts of his muse. His generous hostess had not, herself, always led a blameless life, and her attachment to the Marquis de la Fare is well known; but serious thoughts had at last taken possession of her mind; she was brought to deplore the scandal she had caused by her example, and, like many of her contemporaries, she turned towards religion with a sincerity and an ardour, which excited the admiration even of those who had not the courage to take the same step. So excellent a guide ought to have influenced La Fontaine, and shamed him out of his degraded habits. We find, in fact, that as early as 1684 he felt some anxiety about the state of his soul, and that he manifested slight symptoms of repentance.\* But this first impression was not of long duration. Whilst Madame de la Sablière went about visiting the sick and relieving the poor, he sought distraction in the company of the Prince de Conti and of the Vendômes, whose gross licentiousness would have ruined our poet, had he not been already incapable of becoming worse than he was. Maucroix, Racine, and his other true friends mourned over a moral degradation which was without excuse; Boileau had discontinued seeing him. Saint-Evremond tried to induce him to come over to England, where he would have been received by the Duchess de Mazarin; he wrote to Ninon de Lenclos on the subject, and got the following answer: 'I know that you want La Fontaine in England; we do not enjoy much of his company here at Paris; his head has become very weak. Such is the destiny of poets: Tasso and Lucretius have experienced it.' Ninon

\* Fables, book viii., 14. The last line is an allusion to the system of Descartes on animals.

\* See the admirable *discours en vers* which he composed for his reception at the *Académie Française*.



was wrong in supposing that the poet's head was weak; but excessive indulgences had rendered him completely unfit for society, and the pecuniary relief which the Abbé de Chaulieu kindly placed at his disposal only served to gratify his passions.

At last, the death of Madame de la Sablière and a severe illness brought about the change which La Fontaine's friends had long ceased to expect. On losing her who had proved to him so constant and faithful a guide, the poet found himself once more without a home. Fortunately, M. d'Hervert, councillor in the Parliament of Paris, who had known him for some years, came to his assistance. He met him one day in the street, and asked him to take up his abode in his own house. 'I was going there,' answered the poet. So noble a trust in the generosity of his friends reflects, we think, the greatest credit both upon them and upon the poet himself. The moral revolution which took place in La Fontaine's views had been long delayed, but it was sincere and permanent. He subjected himself to the severest acts of mortification,\* and, giving up all secular works, spent the last years of his life in translating and paraphrasing the hymns of the Paris Breviary. We shall quote here a letter addressed by La Fontaine to Maucroix:—

'You are certainly mistaken, my dear friend, if, as M. de Soissons has informed me, you think that I am more diseased in mind than in body. M. de Soissons told me so in order to give me courage, but that is not what I want. I assure you that the best of your friends cannot reckon upon more than a fortnight's stay in this world. I have not been out for the last two months, except at the Académie, for the sake of recreation. Yesterday, as I was returning, I felt so weak in the Rue du Chantre, that I thought I must have died. O my dear friend! to die is nothing; but do you know that I must appear before God? You are aware how I have lived. Ere you receive this note, the gates of eternity will, perhaps, have opened for me.'

We give now Maucroix's answer:—

'My dear friend, the pain which your last letter causes me is such as you may imagine. But at the same time, I must tell you, that I feel much comforted by the Christian disposition I see you in. My very dear friend, even the best men need the mercy of God. Rely, therefore, upon it with entire confidence, and remember that He calls Himself the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. Wait upon Him with all your heart. . . . If you are too weak to

\* Et l'auteur de *Jocunde* est armé d'un cilice.'

write to me, ask M. Racine to do me that office of charity, the greatest in his power. Adieu, my good, my old, my true friend. May God, in His very great kindness, watch over the health both of your body and of your soul.'

La Fontaine died on the 13th of April, 1695, in his seventy-fourth year.

Most great men have their peculiar legend, founded upon a defect or foible which characterized them, and which issued in some curious fact duly recorded and often amplified by biographers. The dreamy habits of our poet have already been alluded to; they led him to commit occasionally the drollest blunders, and his absence of mind fully equalled that of the well-known Marquis de Brancas, celebrated by La Bruyère. 'His sincerity is perfectly naive,' remarks a critic; 'he thinks aloud, and when people weary him he tell them so point blank. He is credulous to the last, and, according to his own statement, he remains for ever the same "gray-bearded child, who was duped by everybody, and will always be so." He knows neither how to guide himself nor how to behave himself; like nature, he brooks no constraint. During his younger days he had been trusted by his father with a message, on which depended the success of a lawsuit. He goes out, meets some friends, repairs with them to the play, and only on the morrow remembers both the lawsuit and the message. . . . As soon as M. de Harlay provided for his son, he took no notice of him. . . One day he even lifted his hat to the young man without knowing who he was; and some one appearing astonished, "Well," answered La Fontaine, "I believe I have met the lad somewhere before." We need scarcely say that he understood nothing about business.\* In a letter written to Madame de La Fontaine, he relates a fit of absence which happened to him whilst at Orléans. He walked out of the inn where he was staying, for the purpose of seeing the city. On his return, he mistook another hotel for his own, and, entering, went into the garden, where he sat down and began reading a volume of Livy. The waiter came up to him and told him his mistake; he immediately rushed out,

\* Taine, *La Fontaine et ses Fables*. We give here the epitaph which La Fontaine composed for himself. It is quite curious as a piece of autobiography:—

'Jean s'en alla comme il était venu,  
Mangeant son fonds avec son revenu,  
Croyant trésor chose peu nécessaire;  
Quant à son temps, bien sut le dispenser;  
Deux parts en fit, dont il souloit passer  
L'une à dormir, et l'autre à ne rien faire.'

ran to the right place, and 'arrived,' he said, 'just in time to pay the bill.' On another occasion he was at Antony with some friends who had taken him to spend a few days in the country. One day, at dinner-time, La Fontaine could not be discovered. They call, the bell is rung, inquiries are made: no La Fontaine. At last, after dinner was over, he appeared. 'Where do you come from?' he answered that he had been attending the funeral of an ant; he had followed the procession in the garden, and had accompanied the family back to the ant-hill.\*

With La Fontaine's easy disposition, it was not likely that he should ever have enemies. Lulli is the only man with whom he quarrelled. The famous musician had prevailed upon him to write the *libretto* of an opera. *Daphne* was accordingly composed; but Lulli declined it after it was finished, and gave the preference to Quinault's *Proserpine*. Annoyed by this want of courtesy, La Fontaine wrote against Lulli a satire entitled *Le Florentin*, which has been published with his other works. His resentment, however, soon came to an end, and a reconciliation took place between the poet and the musician.

La Fontaine's election as member of the *Académie Française* was also attended with some difficulty, on account of the objectionable character of his *Contes*, but chiefly because he had been preferred to Boileau, whom Louis XIV. was extremely fond of. On the occasion of his first candidature he had obtained sixteen votes out of twenty-three: and would have therefore been elected if the king had not signified his decided displeasure. The death of Bazin de Bezons, twelve months afterwards, necessitated another appointment; Boileau was then chosen, 'and a deputation from the academy having informed his majesty of the fact, the king answered that the election of M. Despreaux (Boileau) was very agreeable to him, and would be generally approved. "You may," added he, "now receive La Fontaine; he has promised to behave himself better." †

After having thus given a short biographical account of the poet, we must come to the consideration of his works; and in doing so we shall endeavour to ascertain briefly, first, how far he was indebted to his predecessors for the subjects he treated; and secondly, what light his compositions throw upon French society during the seventeenth

century. When we glance at the numerous *recueils* of fables and apologues for which Indian literature is so justly celebrated, we are struck at once by the presence of certain stories which occur likewise in the collection of the French fabulist. No less than twenty of his fables may be traced back to the *Pantcha-Tantra*, or the *Hitopadesa*; and the question naturally suggests itself, Did La Fontaine borrow immediately the subjects of these apologues from the Hindus, and if so, what versions had he at his disposal? for his ignorance of the oriental languages is beyond a doubt.\*

In the sixth century of the Christian era, the Persian poet Barzuyet translated the *Pantcha-Tantra* from the Sanscrit into the *Pelhoi* dialect under the title of *Calila and Dimna*. His work in its turn was made to assume an Arab dress two centuries later under the hand of one Abdallah; and from the Arabic a Hebrew version was afterwards prepared by the Rabbi Joel. It was Joel's translation which served as a guide for the converted Jew, John of Capua, who during the thirteenth century composed in Latin a collection of apologues, entitled *Directorium humane Vitæ*; and it is probable that from this last-named work were borrowed most of the stories which at the time of the Renaissance were so popular in Western Europe. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, we find a Spanish translation of the *Directorium*; † and a little later Agnolo Firenzuola adapted this into a work entitled *Discorsi degli Animal*, which was translated almost immediately into French by Gabriel Cottier. (*Discours des Animaux*, 1566.) At the same time the Italian Doni drew from the *Directorium* the matter for a treatise on ethics, illustrated by examples borrowed from ancient writers.‡ The works of Firenzuola and of Doni, translated and combined by the Champenois, Pierre de Larivey, (*Deux Livres de Philosophie fableuse*), appeared in 1599.§ Now, although it cannot be positively affirmed that La Fontaine was acquainted with either Larivey or his Italian originals, yet it is not unlikely that he had access to them. At all events we are in a position to affirm that there are two other oriental collections of fables which the French poet had under his eyes, and which he directly imitated.

\* P. Soullé, *La Fontaine et ses Devanciers*.

† *Ejemplario contra los Enganos y Peligros del Mundo*. Burgos, 1498, folio.

‡ *La Moral Filosofia tratta dagli antichi Scrittori*. Venezia, 1552, quarto.

§ On all these particulars cf. Brunet's *Manuel du Libraire*, s. v. *Bidpai*; and the *Notices et Extraits des MSS. de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, vols. ix., x.

\* Mathieu Marais, *Histoire de la vie et des Ouvrages de La Fontaine*.

† Cf. Pellisson and D'Olivet's *Histoire de l'Académie Française*, vol. II., pp. 24-26, M. C. L. Lévê's edition.

The book of *Calila and Dimna* had been translated from Pelhoy into Persian by Abu 'Conaali Nasrallah during the twelfth century, and recast during the fifteenth by Hocein-Vaiz, under the title *Anvari Sohaile* ('Lights of Canopus'). In 1644, says M. Loiseleur-Deslongchamps, appeared for the first time a French version of Indian apoloques. This book, composed by David Sahid, was really the translation of the first four books of the *Anvari*; and it suggested to La Fontaine some of his best fables. It was reprinted in 1698, with a few slight alterations, under the title: *Fables de Pilpay, Philosophe Indien, ou la Conduite des Rois*. Let us also notice that towards the close of the eleventh century the *Calila and Dimna* had been translated into Greek by Simeon Sett; and in 1666 a learned Jesuit, Father Poussine, published an elegant version of Sett's Greek rendering, under the title, *Specimen Sapientie Indorum veterum*. Huet, who was tutor to the Dauphin, may have lent to La Fontaine Poussine's *Specimen*; at any rate it is quite certain that the fabulist was acquainted with it.

In order to show what La Fontaine made of the Eastern apoloques, we shall select the fable entitled *The Tortoise and the Two Ducks*; it is one of the poet's best, and, besides, it has been treated not only by the author of the *Pantcha-Tantra*, but by Hocein-Vaiz, Babrius, and Æsop, or rather Planudes. Our first excerpt is from *Calila and Dimna*:—

"On a certain occasion, the hen-bird of a species of sea-fowl, called Titani, said to the cock, "I wish we could find a secure place to hatch our young; for I am afraid that the genius of the sea will discover them, and take them away." The cock desired her to remain where she was, as there was plenty of food; upon which she reproached him with his inconsiderateness, but received the same answer, with some observations on the unreasonableness of her alarm. The hen still persisted in urging her apprehensions, and cautioned the cock not to treat so lightly what she said, reminding him of what happened to the tortoise and the two geese, who, being in the same pond with him, and living on terms of intimacy and friendship, were unwilling to go away, when the too great decrease of the water made their departure necessary, without taking leave of him. The tortoise observed to them, that the diminution of the water was more a reason for his departure, as he was almost as helpless on dry land as a ship, than for theirs, and begged that they would take him with them; to which they agreed, and for that purpose desired him to suspend himself from the middle of a long piece of wood, one end of which each of them would take hold of, and in

this manner fly away with him, strictly forbidding him to utter a sound. They had not flown far, when some persons below, seeing what was passing over their heads, and crying out from astonishment, the tortoise, alarmed at the discovery, and forgetting the injunction which he had received, expressed aloud his wish that their eyes might be plucked out; and, losing his hold upon opening his mouth, fell to the ground and was killed.\*

The same story occurs in the *Hitopadesa* with a few variations:—

'In Magrada-desa there is a pool called Thulotpala. In it for a long time dwelt two geese, by name Sankata and Vikata. A friend of theirs, a turtle, called Kambri-Griva, ("shell-neck,") lived near. Once on a time, some fishermen having come there said, "We will lodge here now, and in the morning we will kill fish, tortoises, and the like." The turtle overhearing that, said to the geese, "My friends, you have heard the conversation of the fishermen: what must I do now?" The geese replied, "First of all, let us be assured of it; afterwards, that must be done which is proper: . . . . could another lake be reached, thy safety would be secured: but what means hast thou of going on dry land?" The turtle replied, "Let means be contrived so that I may go along with you through the air." "But how," said the geese "is the expedient practicable?" "Why," observed the turtle, "with my mouth I can hang on to a staff, held in the beak by both of you; and thus by the strength of your wings I may go with ease." "This contrivance is feasible," said the geese; "let it be so; but, something is sure to be said by the people, when they see thee borne along by us; on hearing which, if thou givest a reply, thy death will ensue: therefore, on every account, remain here." "Am I then an idiot?" said the turtle, "not a syllable shall be uttered by me." The plan being accordingly put in execution, all the herdsmen, when they saw the turtle being borne along in the air, ran after, exclaiming, "Hallo! a most marvellous thing!—a turtle is carried by two birds!" Then, said one, "If this turtle falls, he shall be cooked and eaten on the very spot." "He shall be taken to the house," said another. "He must be cooked and eaten near the pool," said another. On hearing this unkind language, he cried out in a passion, forgetting his engagement, "You shall eat ashes!" Whilst he was speaking, he fell from the stick, and was killed by the herdsmen.†

Now, in an apologue we always look for a practical moral lesson; and this is what the Eastern tale does not supply. The Hindu tortoise is perfectly excusable: if

\* *Calila and Dimna, or the Fables of Bidpai*: translated from the Asiatic, by the Rev. W. Knatchbull. Oxford, 1849. 8vo.

† *Hitopadesa*, Professor Johnson's Translation.

he leaves his native place, it is only from necessity, and for the sake of following his friends. He has for a long time put up with the jokes of the passers-by, and certainly in his place everybody would have been provoked to let the stick go. Where, then, is the morality, or rather what moral lesson can be derived from the adventure? The poet should have represented the tortoise as an imprudent animal, inquisitive, and fond of talking, and thus prepared the answer which from his lofty position he made to the astonished observers.\* La Fontaine may have borrowed from the *Lights of Canopus*, or from the *Hutopadesa*, the leading incidents of his fable; but it is to Æsop that he was indebted for the true character of the tortoise and the moral conclusion of the anecdote:—

'The Turtle and the Eagle. — A turtle was beseeching an eagle to teach him to fly. As the bird represented to the petitioner that such a gift was not in accordance with the laws of his nature, the turtle insisted. The eagle, having then taken him up in his claws, carried him away into the air and dropped him. The turtle, falling upon some stones, was dashed to pieces. This fable shows that many people, in discussions, have ruined themselves by refusing to attend to the advice of wiser men.'

Æsop, we see, is as short, concise, and dry as the Hindu fabulist is prolix. La Fontaine could not have access to the text of Babrius, which we shall now quote, and which is an elegant development of the idea of the other Greek moralist:—

'Once to the divers, gulls, and wild sea-mews,  
A sluggish tortoise thus expressed her views:  
"Would that I, too, had had the luck to fly!"  
An eagle chanced to hear, and made reply:  
"Tortoise, how much shall be the eagle's prize,  
If to the air he makes thee lightly rise?"  
"Thou shalt have all and each of ocean's gifts!"  
"Agreed!" the eagle cries, and lightly lifts  
The other to the clouds upon her back,  
Then lets her fall, and on the hill-side crack  
Her brittle coat of shell. He heard her cry,  
At the last gasp, "I well deserve to die!  
Where was to me of clouds and wings the need,  
Who on my mother earth could make no  
speed?"'†

We now see how La Fontaine has turned to account in his fable the narratives both of Hindu and of Greek origin. With him, as with the *Hutopadesa*, two ducks convey the tortoise through the air by means of a

stick which he holds in his mouth. The clamours of the passers-by excite the tortoise to speak, make him lose his hold of the stick, and precipitate him on the ground. But, on the other hand, far from being compelled to travel, La Fontaine's tortoise, like that of Æsop, is moved by a fit of stupid vanity, and that vanity, making him speak, leads to his death. He is described as 'light-headed,'—a comical expression, which portrays the animal perfectly, and forms an amusing contrast with the heaviness of its steps. The ducks are two adventurers who care for nothing, and are ready to undertake any job for a 'handsome consideration.' The proposal they make to the tortoise 'to carry him over to America, in order that, like Ulysses, he may see many nations,' is a laughable piece of exaggeration. La Fontaine describes very accurately the means of conveyance, and he leaves the tortoise without excuse for his mishap. The *ὁ μύθος ὁλητοί* is also admirably deduced, and strikes the reader forcibly by its shrewd common sense.

If we turn now from Greece to Rome, we meet with Phædrus as the natural parallel to La Fontaine. The Latin writer, however, despite his elegance and the purity of his style, has something about him too stiff and formal; he understands the art of carrying out a dialogue, but he never excites the imagination, nor appeals to the feelings. He states his subject, and rushes on to the conclusion without giving way to a smile, or showing the slightest emotion: the *dramatis personæ* he introduces are principally not animals, but stiff and pompous Roman citizens, sometimes pedagogues and lecturers. We should add that he possesses the practical common sense of the old *Quirites*; and if he does not succeed in pleasing as much, he inculcates sound maxims under the garb of harmonious language, and no fault can be found with his morality. He has the qualities of a philosopher, not those of a poet.... His fables are of unequal merit; out of ninety, fifteen only are really beautiful, and even those have been surpassed both by Babrius and La Fontaine.\* Horace, too, must be mentioned in our brief retrospect of the principal apologue-writers of antiquity. Some of the popular fables treated by La Fontaine have been versified both by him and by Phædrus; and it is curious to see how differently the same subject can be handled according to the respective intellectual habits of the authors. The well-known history of the frog wishing to emulate the ox has suggested to Phæ-

\* H. Taine, *La Fontaine et ses Fables*.

† The *Fables of Babrius*, translated by the Rev. James Davies, 1860, 8vo.

\* Soullié, *La Fontaine et ses Devanciers*.



drus one of his most remarkable fables; but still the Latin poem is extremely tame and colourless, as compared with the sprightly dialogue and the *naïveté* of the French author. Horace has a great deal more simplicity than Phædrus; he is neither stilted nor pedantic; but, at the same time, he lacks that *abandon* and that inimitable humour which are so characteristic of La Fontaine's fables, even the worst.

It would be useless to review here all the collections of tales and apologues composed by mediæval writers. Romulus, Avienus, Vincent of Beauvais, in his *Speculum Historiale*, the famous romance of *Reynard the Fox*, even the sermons of Jean Gerson, and other divines, might afford themes for a parallel; but want of space obliges us to be brief; and, in connection with this part of our subject, we shall only name one author, Abstemius. Perhaps the best instance which can be adduced of La Fontaine's perfect skill in improving upon his predecessors, is to be found in the fable entitled, *Le Vieillard et les trois Jeunes Hommes*. Cicero (*De Senectute*) had already pointed out the folly of old men labouring and toiling for results which they are never to see; and Abstemius, putting the same idea in the shape of a fable, had, so to speak, given the skeleton of what might have been an entertaining story. Now La Fontaine appears; he takes up the lifeless corpse and animates it; he interests us in the actors of the drama, instead of merely making them utter in a formal manner a few ethical maxims; he enlivens a commonplace precept by delineations of character, by a sprightly dialogue, and by admirable touches of pathos; finally, he has so completely the talent of expressing the thoughts which are accessible to the average class of readers, that he leaves all other fabulists in the shade.

The French *conteurs* of the Renaissance period are those whom La Fontaine studied most, and to whom he was particularly indebted. 'Amyot, who was so thoroughly master of all the delicacies of the French language, and who imparted so much ease to the elaborate style of Plutarch, was one of La Fontaine's favourite authors; he furnished him with the subject of more than twenty fables; and, what is still more important, he gave him the model of that style, at once simple and sensible, which is the great characteristic of French literature.\*' Rabelais, however, amongst the authors of the sixteenth century, is the one whom La Fontaine most relished, and whose influence

he most felt. 'He was, beyond question, the most original writer of his age, the greatest laugh, perhaps, that ever existed, and one of the shrewdest observers of any age and country. Inferior to Molière for truth and composition, and to Aristophanes in point of elegance of style, he is superior to both by his inexhaustible comic humour. Unfortunately he is repulsively coarse, and often wearisome on account of his prolixity. He attacks Christianity in the name of nature; but that sensual disposition, the want of elevation in the ideas, and the every-day common sense which kills enthusiasm and leaves no room for heroism,—all these qualities were somewhat those of La Fontaine.\*' The fabulist borrowed from Rabelais the subject of some of his best fables, and improved them considerably. Thus the thirty-third chapter of the first book of Pantagruel supplied most of the allusions contained in the fable of *The Milkmaid*. *The Woman and the Secret*, *The Wishes*, *The Wood-cutter and Mercury*, *The Boy and the Schoolmaster*, can all be traced to Rabelais. Bonaventure Desperiers, and Noel du Fail, Seigneur de la Hérisseye, are two authors who belonged to the same period, and who deserve to be named amongst the precursors of La Fontaine.

It seems extraordinary that Clement Marot, whose talent was so similar to that of our fabulist, should have left only one specimen of this style of composition. Gilles Corrozet, one of his contemporaries, published, in 1542, a collection of one hundred fables, some of which are dull; whilst the others, the great majority we should say, are characterized by a *naïveté* which is quite remarkable. La Fontaine himself could not surpass Corrozet's elegance in his story of *The Wolf and the Goat*; and a comparison of the two fables brings out all the merits of the older poet. When we have named Guillaume Guérout, Baif, Le Noble, and Régnier, we shall have completed the list of *litterateurs*, whom our fabulist may be supposed to have studied. It now remains for us to see how La Fontaine applied his genius as a painter of the society amidst which he lived, and how his sketches of character deserve to be ranked on the same line as St. Simon's admirable portraits.

An ingenious author has lately written the history of France, merely with the help of the productions of dramatic literature; he has sought in the pages of comedy for the originals of well-known characters and has taken the popular *vaudevilles* of the day as

\* Soullié, *La Fontaine et ses Devanciers*.

\* *Ibid.*

trustworthy representations of the public mind. So it might be; so indeed it has been with our fabulist. M. Taine, in his ingenious Essay, entitled *La Fontaine et ses Fables*, shows us the court of Versailles, the magistracy, the clergy, the *tiers-état*, supplying the poet with innumerable models; and the *recueil* of his Fables thus becomes a kind of accessory evidence to Saint-Simon's *Mémoires*, La Bruyère's *Caractères*, and the tedious but suggestive journal of Dangeau. Let us consult this amusing historical commentary, and borrow from M. Taine a few remarks, which may enable us the better to appreciate La Fontaine's Fables.

Treated as it is by *le bonhomme*, the apologues assumes almost the proportions of an *Iliad*. Here is the king; let him pass first; then we shall have the tiger, the bear, and the other 'powers that be'; then the gentlemen of the long robe, the church, the physicians, the government agents, and, finally, the rabble, 'the beasts of low degree,' which have neither pomp nor circumstance. It would be no doubt a mistake to suppose that La Fontaine has intentionally endeavoured to give us the full-length of Louis XIV., under the features of 'His leonine Majesty;' but just in the same way as the Greeks and Romans of Racine's tragedies are unconsciously elegant viscounts and noble marchionesses, so La Fontaine could scarcely help portraying the characters he had met with, and drawing upon his own recollections.

'If the king,' says M. Taine 'stoops down to speak to a courtier, it is with proud condescension; and even then he commits himself only "when he has well dined." Nevertheless, after breaking through the laws of etiquette, one must needs seek a kind of self-justification. Jupiter's example is claimed as a precedent. If Jupiter is sometimes *ennuyé*, one can assuredly be *ennuyé* likewise; consequently, let us try to get rid of *ennui*, by summoning around us buffoons and sycophants, laughing at their expense, allowing ourselves to be flattered, and even sometimes consenting to gratify them with an angustsmile. But if the toady is awkward; if, for instance, he proposes himself too openly as a spy and a menial; how quickly the monarch assumes his haughty expression of contempt! He dismisses the wretches. He does not want vain babblers at his court. He quietly crushes them down, under their true title. Offensive nick-names, comical jokes, open insults,—the king finds at once an ample provision of bitter expressions; accustomed to despise, he is an adept in the art of offending, and does the one as naturally as the other.' — Page 76.

M. Taine borrows from La Fontaine every

feature which serves to make up the portrait of a despot, such as Louis XIV. was. When a king has for many years heard himself compared to the sun, to a god, to Providence, he must be really beyond all praise, if he is not brought to believe that both men and things were created expressly and exclusively for his service. In 1710, the doctors of Sorbonne decided that subjects belong to their rulers; and, according to these divines, the king bestows as a gift upon people every thing which he does not think proper to deprive them of. The nation, we should say had finally come to endorse so monstrous a doctrine. 'We rent the clouds,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'with the shouts of *Vive le Roi!* We kindled bonfires, and sang a *Te Deum*, because His Majesty was kind enough to accept our money!' See the fable entitled *The Animals sick of the Plague*.<sup>\*</sup> What a deplorable picture of selfishness and of cruelty! Calamity advises the king to consult his advisers; he makes a beautiful speech on the public good, and all the time thinks of nothing else but his own interest. The plague has arrived: 'It is necessary that one animal should devote himself for the rest. His subjects are now 'his dear friends;' he makes a general confession of his sins; he will not have any thing to do with flattery. He looks over his conscience, which is somewhat burdened: murders, innocent sheep devoured, even the shepherd: 'I shall therefore offer my life as a sacrifice, if it is necessary!' What abnegation! What generosity! But there must be limits to virtue; and the lion's proposal is subjected to certain restrictions. His Majesty stops in time, looks round, invites his courtiers to select a victim, and the poor defenceless donkey is pointed out. The lion is a consummate politician; always a tyrant, he has now become a hypocrite. *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*.†

We need not go farther than this admirable apologue,‡ to find the finished portrait of courtiers, such as those who crowded the galleries of Versailles. 'Every one was a courtier during the seventeenth century,' M. Taine remarks. 'From mere affection, the Duke de La Rochefoucauld never slept out of the palace once for twenty years, without asking his master's leave. People consulted every morning Bloin, the *valet de cham-*

<sup>\*</sup> La Fontaine, *Fables*, vii., 1.

† Taine, pp. 81, 82.

‡ 'C'est le plus beau des apologues de La Fontaine et de tous les apologues. . . . C'est presque l'histoire de toute société humaine.' — Charles Nodier.

bre, in order to know what temper the king was in, and what countenance they should assume.\* How naturally the impudence and servility of the French aristocracy are depicted by La Fontaine!—

'To praise is nothing; you must persuade despots that they deserve that praise. Every thing is lost, if they once believe that they have been flattered. The courtier must impress the monarch with the idea that his eulogy is sincere, and that His Majesty is really virtuous. He should get into a passion, be carried away by his zeal; if necessary, he should appear to blame the king, and, for the sake of truth, to overstep the bounds of propriety. "The king is too good, his scruples give proof of too much tenderness of conscience." The orator pleads on His Majesty's behalf against "that rabble, that parcel of idiots." A villain is a cultivating machine; just as sheep are cutlet-stores, nothing else. You honour them when you put them to some use. But the flatterer has better still to say; after the aristocratic argument, comes the philosophic one; the panegyrist extemporizes a theory of right, and a refutation of slavery. He attacks eloquently the shepherd who arrogates to himself a groundless empire over the animals. He speaks in the name of the crown. In like manner, Frederick the Great used to say to his nephew: "Whenever you want to claim a province, get around you plenty of troops. Your orators will find arguments enough to establish your rights."—Pp. 93, 94.

La Fontaine has described with extraordinary accuracy the different varieties of the genus nobleman. The country squire who lives on his estates, far from the court, too independent to assume the golden fetters of Versailles, is the bear. If one day he ventures out of his hole, his clumsy manners betray him. He enters a drawing-room with thick shoes and soiled garments; he wishes to pay a compliment, and breaks down in the middle; he is a misanthropist, and as such builds up odd theories on all sorts of subjects. But his sterling qualities, his fidelity and scrupulous honesty, made people forget his uncouthness; and as he is distinguished for his modesty, he is appointed to subaltern posts which no one else would condescend to accept, and which he fills most admirably.

Next comes the fly, that is to say, the busy-body, thoroughly convinced of his own importance, proud of an empty title, and mistaking impudence for dignity. His quarters are ante-chambers, drawing-rooms, boudoirs. He talks glibly, deals in non-

sense, and pleases by his very emptiness. Acastes in Molière's play reminds us of the fly in La Fontaine's fables. He is rich, of a good family, on excellent terms with the ladies, and especially with himself. He makes a point of being present at the *petit coucher*, and the king would miss him. In like manner the fly frequents the palace, and sits down at the master's table. He fancies he urges on the coach-horses and stimulates the driver, like the marquis who was present at the siege of Arras, and who helped to storm an advanced work. The *gentilhomme* with his chatter, and the fly with his buzzing, have the same levity, the same emptiness, the same brilliancy, and the same end. Acastes is one of those men whose sole merit is in their sword: after having visited palaces and taken his seat at the king's board, he spends the winter on his own estates, famishing with hunger. In like manner the poor insect may levy its tithes on Jupiter's banquets, but the early autumnal frosts will carry it off.

Then the Church. — La Fontaine spares neither the secular nor the regular clergy; and some of his most amusing fables are bitter but true descriptions of the vices which unfortunately characterized the priests and monks in France during the seventeenth century. Besides, as M. Taine remarks, 'the clergy has never been on the other side of the Channel a favourite with the public. They are considered merely as a body of public functionaries, the prefects and sub-prefects of doctrine and of morality. We, the French, having nothing to do with their appointment, we receive them from above, just as we receive dogmas; and this is why, notwithstanding all our docility, we are so little impressed by what they say to us.' Our critic goes on to assert that the French nation is radically irreligious, and not liable to be alarmed by the voice of conscience. He describes it as essentially sceptical, given to railery, quick in reducing to one common level all privileged individuals, in seeking for the man under the costume of the public dignitary, and believing that for every one, as well as for Frenchmen, the great business of life is dissipation or pleasure. France, he says, has always been of Voltaire's religion. Now, with due deference to M. Taine's unquestionable talent, we object both to the principle which he puts forth, and also to its particular application. The theory, so popular at the present time, which represents nations as necessarily distinguished by such or such moral qualities and defects, in virtue of their geogra-

\* Taine, p. 85.

phical position, seems to us equally dangerous and false. It is dangerous, because it strikes a fatal blow at the root of man's responsibility; and it is false, because the examples quoted prove just the reverse of what they are supposed to illustrate. As a case in point, we would mention M. Renan's well-known theory of the monotheism which, he says, has distinguished in all times the people belonging to the Semitic race. Now, it is proved to a certainty that, with the exception of the Jews, *not one of the Semitic tribes* held the tenets of monotheism; and it was the interposition of Providence alone, that preserved among the children of Israel the principles of true religion for the education of the human race. We insult France when we describe it as an irreligious nation; persecution, government interference, and the sway of the Church of Rome, have combined in that country with the natural corruptions of the human heart, to suppress the truth; but whenever the Gospel has been faithfully preached, multitudes have flocked round the banner of the cross. The struggles carried on by the Huguenots and the Jansenists are facts strong enough to upset M. Taine's fanciful idea.

At the same time we are quite ready to acknowledge that La Fontaine's Jean Chouart was a faithful portrait of the average parish priest in France during the seventeenth century. But even he had an advantage over the monk. The member of the secular clergy is, we have said, viewed in the light of a public functionary; therefore, although he may not be a favourite, yet he is to some extent respected, because he has a species of work to do, and he is paid by the state for doing it. With the monk it is quite the reverse. A monk is an idler; and if he has renounced the world, it is only that he may devote his attention more exclusively to himself. Under the reign of *etiquette*, hypocrisy must always be the crying sin; and against this sin La Fontaine, as well as Molière and La Bruyère, uses the strongest language. Whenever the king attended mass, the chapel was crowded with courtiers; one day he came when he was not expected, and seemed greatly astonished at finding all the seats empty. La Fontaine, therefore, in denouncing hypocrisy, only exposed a prevailing sin. The cat, which he selects as the impersonation of monkdom, is like Tartuffe, 'fat and plump,' with a pious demeanour and reverend aspect. When in difficulties, he calls the rat his 'dear friend:' he has always distinguished him from the other

animals of the same family; he loves him like 'his own eyes,' and, whilst addressing him, his words distil honey and sugar. Tartuffe breaks off in the middle of a disagreeable conversation by saying that 'it is half-past three, and that a certain pious duty calls him away:' Pussy in similar manner alludes to the prayers he makes in the morning, as is the custom with all pious cats.\*

But let us leave the monk to his beads, and the parish priest to his breviary; here comes the *bourgeois*, the 'cit,' as we should say, with his absurdities and his foibles. We cannot translate the French substantive by its English equivalent *burgess*, because this term immediately recalls to our mind an individual who takes a certain part in the government of his country, who acts as chairman in public meetings, is vestryman, churchwarden, president of a board of health, — in short, who contributes to administrative measures, either local or general. La Fontaine's *bourgeois*, far from suggesting sentiments of respect, merely inspires ridicule, and very justly so. Let us hear M. Taine: —

'Government has relieved him from political business; the Church has obviated on his part the necessity of meddling with ecclesiastical topics. The metropolis assumes the monopoly of taste, the courtiers that of elegance. Administration, thanks to its regularity, spares him the anxieties of want, and defends him against every danger. He thus lives, in a certain fashion, degraded, but quiet. Compared with him, an Athenian shoemaker, who sat as judge, voted, and went to war, was a nobleman, although his furniture might consist of a bed and two broken pitchers. The German *bourgeois* find a vent for their activity in science, religion, or music. A small *rentier* (annuitant) in Calabria, with his threadbare coat, dances, and enjoys the fine arts . . . As for our Frenchman, more particularly at the present day, without either curiosity or desires, incapable of enterprise or invention, limited by trifling profits or by a paltry income he saves his money, enjoys himself stupidly, picks up cast-off ideas and second-hand furniture; his idle ambition is to try the comparative merits of mahogany and rosewood . . . Our *bourgeois* is no Cincinnatus. Pride generally produces disinterestedness. A Swiss or Roman rustic, who sometimes might be called to the command of an army, and settle the destinies of his valley or his city, — such a man could have noble sentiments. Leaving to others the passion for gain, he could live on bread and onions, satisfied with the pleasure of governing. His condition made a nobleman of him. How would you have those ideas springing up amidst our modern habits? An honest *bourgeois* does

\* Taine, pp. 122, 123.



not steal his neighbour's property; but he does nothing more. It would be stupid in him to devote himself for the place he lives in. When municipal charges are only exercised under the *intendant's* good will and pleasure, they are not worth an act of self-sacrifice. Whether he is an alderman or a mayor, he is merely a servant of the king; and as his superiors turn him to the most profitable account they can, he is sorely tempted to do exactly the same thing with those who are below him. Noble pride and generosity are the wholesome plants springing on the soil of power or independence; everywhere else selfishness and little-mindedness thrive like thistles.\*

If this sad picture represents to us the French *bourgeoisie* of the nineteenth century, it is equally applicable to La Fontaine's contemporaries. His rats, fed upon cheese, and elated by prosperity, become impertinent. The cat is absent; they plot against him, and are determined to throw off the yoke they have so long and so patiently borne. You fancy you see a company of asthmatic conspirators gathered together; they are equipped, they have taken particular care to provide themselves with victuals, their commissariat is in excellent order. All of a sudden the cat appears, a general dispersion takes place, and the trembling revolutionists are too happy if they can reach safely their respective domiciles. In another fable it is the vanity of the *bourgeois*, not their quarrelsome invidious temper, that is portrayed; and here the ass sits for his likeness. Even the defects of a nobleman are sometimes charming; at all events they have some style about them: on the contrary, the very merits of plain *monsieur* are spoiled by want of taste. When the ass wants to sing, he brays; if he wishes to caress his master, he forgets that instead of a cat's paw he has nothing but a clumsy, dirty hoof. During the eighteenth century, the *bourgeois* who wanted to become a man of consequence joined the band of the *philosophers*; under Louis XIV., he purchased a sinecure office, had a genealogical tree made for him by D'Hozier, and turned *gentilhomme* like M. Jourdain.

It would be curious thus to study in La Fontaine's fables the whole of that epoch which has been so falsely called *le grand siècle*, but we must forbear. Let us, however, before bringing this article to a conclusion, say a word of our author's melancholy. He was fond of laughing, no doubt;

at the same time we should remember that gaiety is often closely connected with sadness, and that smiles and tears generally keep company. The society of the time of Louis XIV. had many ridiculous themes of study for the thinker; it had also a terrible one, and that was the *people*, in the literal acceptance of the word. Cast aside the tinsel, the velvet, the silk, which strike our view at first; and look at the woodcutter, the peasant in his mud hovel, clothed with rags, weighed down by misery and want. La Fontaine's apologue on the subject is like a picture by Rembrandt, hung up in the midst of a collection of Teniers. Read as a commentary on it the graphic pages of De Tocqueville, or the details given by contemporary memoirs. 'No bread sometimes,' says the fabulist; and history tells us that in 1700 Madame de Maintenon herself was reduced to the coarsest food. On the eve of the Revolution, whilst peace was reigning throughout Europe, the peasant's wages were ninepence halfpenny a day, and yet bread was as dear as it is now. Not only had he his wife and children to provide for, but he must out of his scanty earnings pay the king's taxes, the tithes to the Church, the feudal dues to the Lord of the manor. Is this living? No! What pleasure, what treat has he had since he was born? His wedding dinner, perhaps; and every now and then a glass of bad wine.\*

Accuracy, we thus see, is one of the leading characteristics of La Fontaine's talent; he is life-like and domestic. If we compare his fables with La Motte's stilted compositions, or with Florian's mannerism à la Greuze, what a difference! The great merit of Fouquet's friend is that his writings afford endless pleasure both to children and to philosophers. The former are attracted by the story, which is simply told, and by the *dramatis personæ*, who act before us naively and to the point; the latter admire his knowledge of the human heart, his quiet but telling satire, and the boldness with which he described his contemporaries. As we wander through that entertaining gallery, where truth is only made the more piquant by the addition of a transparent veil, we can see the whole of the seventeenth century like a vast panorama unfolded before our view; and we feel that we have been spending our time in the society of one of the most faithful historians of men and manners that the annals of French literature can boast of.

\* Taine, pp. 123, 124.

\* Taine, pp. 156, 157.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## MRS. GIBSON'S LITTLE DINNER.

ALL this had taken place before Roger's first meeting with Molly and Cynthia at Miss Brownings'; and the little dinner on the Friday at Mr. Gibson's, which followed in due sequence.

Mrs. Gibson intended the Hamleys to find this dinner pleasant; and they did. Mr. Gibson was fond of these two young men, both for their parents' sake and their own, for he had known them since boyhood; and to those whom he liked Mr. Gibson could be remarkably agreeable. Mrs. Gibson really gave them a welcome—and cordiality in a hostess is a very becoming mantle for any other deficiencies there may be. Cynthia and Molly looked their best, which was all the duty Mrs. Gibson absolutely required of them, as she was willing enough to take her full share in the conversation. Osborne fell to her lot, of course, and for some time he and she prattled on with all the ease of manner and commonplaceness of meaning which go far to make the "art of polite conversation." Roger, who ought to have made himself agreeable to one or the other of the young ladies, was exceedingly interested in what Mr. Gibson was telling him of a paper on comparative osteology in some foreign journal of science, which Lord Hollingford was in the habit of forwarding to his friend the country surgeon. Yet every now and then while he listened he caught his attention wandering to the face of Cynthia, who was placed between his brother and Mr. Gibson. She was not particularly occupied with attending to anything that was going on; her eyelids were carelessly dropped, as she crumbled her bread on the tablecloth, and her beautiful long eyelashes were seen on the clear tint of her oval cheek. She was thinking of something else; Molly was trying to understand with all her might. Suddenly Cynthia looked up, and caught Roger's gaze of intent admiration too fully for her to be unaware that he was staring at her. She coloured a little, but after the first moment of rosy confusion at his evident admiration of her, she flew to the attack, diverting his confusion at thus being caught, to the defence of himself from her accusation.

"It is quite true!" she said to him. "I was not attending: you see I don't know even the A B C of science. But, please, don't look so severely at me, even if I am a dunce!"

"I did not know—I did not mean to look

severely; I am sure," replied he, not knowing well what to say.

"Cynthia is not a dunce either," said Mrs. Gibson, afraid lest her daughter's opinion of herself might be taken seriously. "But I have always observed that some people have a talent for one thing and some for another. Now Cynthia's talents are not for science and the severer studies. Do you remember, love, what trouble I had to teach you the use of the globes?"

"Yes; and I don't know longitude from latitude now; and I'm always puzzled as to which is perpendicular and which is horizontal."

"Yet, I do assure you," her mother continued, rather addressing herself to Osborne, "that her memory for poetry is prodigious. I have heard her repeat the 'Prisoner of Chillon' from beginning to end."

"It would be rather a bore to have to hear her, I think," said Mr. Gibson, smiling at Cynthia, who gave him back one of her bright looks of mutual understanding.

"Ah, Mr. Gibson, I have found out before now that you have no soul for poetry; and Molly there is your own child. She reads such deep books—all about facts and figures: she'll be quite a blue-stocking by and by."

"Mamma," said Molly, reddening, "you think it was a deep book because there were the shapes of the different cells of bees in it; but it was not at all deep. It was very interesting."

"Never mind, Molly," said Osborne. "I stand up for blue-stockings!"

"And I object to the distinction implied in what you say," said Roger. "It was not deep, *ergo*, it was very interesting. Now, a book may be both deep and interesting."

"Oh, if you are going to chop logic and use Latin words, I think it is time for us to leave the room," said Mrs. Gibson.

"Don't let us run away as if we were beaten, mamma," said Cynthia. "Though it may be logic, I, for one, can understand what Mr. Roger Hamley said just now; and I read some of Molly's book; and whether it was deep or not I found it very interesting—more so than I should think the 'Prisoner of Chillon' now-a-days. I've displaced the Prisoner to make room for Johnnie Gilpin as my favourite poem."

"How could you talk such nonsense, Cynthia?" said Mrs. Gibson, as the girls followed her upstairs. "You know you are not a dunce. It is all very well not to be a blue-stocking, because gentle-people don't like that kind of woman; but running yourself down, and contradicting all I said about

your liking for Byron, and poets and poetry — to Osborne Hamley of all men, too!"

Mrs Gibson spoke quite crossly for her.

"But, mamma," Cynthia replied, "I am either a dunce, or I am not. If I am, I did right to own it; if I am not, he's a dunce if he doesn't find out I was joking."

"Well," said Mrs Gibson, a little puzzled by this speech, and wanting some elucidatory addition.

"Only that if he's a dunce his opinion of me is worth nothing. So, any way, it doesn't signify."

"You really bewilder me with your nonsense, child. Molly is worth twenty of you."

"I quite agree with you, mamma," said Cynthia, turning round to take Molly's hand.

"Yes; but she ought not to be," said Mrs. Gibson, still irritated. "Think of the advantages you've had."

"I'm afraid I had rather be a dunce than a blue-stocking," said Molly; for the term had a little annoyed her, and the annoyance was rankling still.

"Hush; here they are coming: I hear the dining-room door! I never meant you were a blue-stocking, dear, so don't look vexed. — Cynthia, my love, where did you get those lovely flowers — anemones, are they? They suit your complexion so exactly."

"Come, Molly, don't look so grave and thoughtful," exclaimed Cynthia. "Don't you perceive mamma wants us to be smiling and amiable?"

Mr. Gibson had had to go out to his evening round; and the young men were all too glad to come up into the pretty drawing-room; the bright little wood fire; the comfortable easy chairs which, with so small a party, might be drawn round the hearth; the good-natured hostess; the pretty, agreeable girls. Roger sauntered up to the corner where Cynthia was standing, playing with a hand-screen.

"There is a charity ball in Hollingford soon, isn't there?" asked he.

"Yes; on Easter Tuesday," she replied.

"Are you going? I suppose you are?"

"Yes; mamma is going to take Molly and me."

"You will enjoy it very much — going together?"

For the first time during this little conversation she glanced up at him — real honest pleasure shining out of her eyes.

"Yes; going together will make the enjoyment of the thing. It would be dull without her."

"You are great friends, then?" he asked.

"I never thought I should like any one so much, — any girl I mean."

She put in the final reservation in all simplicity of heart; and in all simplicity did he understand it. He came ever so little nearer, and dropped his voice a little.

"I was so anxious to know. I am so glad. I have often wondered how you two were getting on."

"Have you?" said she, looking up again. "At Cambridge? You must be very fond of Molly!"

"Yes, I am. She was with us so long; and at such a time! I look upon her almost as a sister."

"And she is very fond of all of you. I seem to know you all from hearing her talk about you so much."

"All of you!" said she, laying an emphasis on "all" to show that it included the dead as well as the living. Roger was silent for a minute or two.

"I didn't know you, even by hearsay. So you mustn't wonder that I was a little afraid. But as soon as I saw you, I knew how it must be; and it was such a relief!"

"Cynthia," said Mrs Gibson, who thought that the younger son had had quite his share of low confidential conversation, "come here, and sing that little French ballad to Mr. Osborne Hamley."

"Which do you mean, mamma? 'Tu t'en repentiras, Colin?'"

"Yes; such a pretty, playful little warning to young men," said Mrs. Gibson, smiling up at Osborne. "The refrain is —

'Tu t'en repentiras, Colin,  
Tu t'en repentiras,  
Car si tu prends une femme, Colin,  
Tu t'en repentiras.'

The advice may apply very well when there is a French wife in the case; but not, I am sure, to an Englishman who is thinking of an English wife."

This choice of a song was exceedingly *mal-à-propos*, had Mrs. Gibson but known it. Osborne and Roger knowing that the wife of the former was a Frenchwoman, and, conscious of each other's knowledge, felt doubly awkward; while Molly was as much confused as though she herself were secretly married. However, Cynthia carolled the saucy ditty out, and her mother smiled at it, in total ignorance of any application it might have. Osborne had instinctively gone to stand behind Cynthia, as she sate at the piano, so as to be ready

to turn over the leaves of her music if she required it. He kept his hands in his pockets and his eyes fixed on her fingers; his countenance clouded with gravity at all the merry quips which she so playfully sang. Roger looked grave as well, but was much more at his ease than his brother; indeed, he was half-amused by the awkwardness of the situation. He caught Molly's troubled eyes and heightened colour, and he saw that she was feeling this contretemps more seriously than she needed to do. He moved to a seat by her, and half whispered, "Too late a warning, is it not?"

Molly looked up at him as he leant towards her, and replied in the same tone — "Oh, I am so sorry!"

"You need not be. He won't mind it long; and a man must take the consequences when he puts himself in a false position."

Molly could not tell what to reply to this, so she hung her head and kept silence. Yet she could see that Roger did not change his attitude or remove his hand from the back of his chair, and, impelled by curiosity to find out the cause of his stillness, she looked up at him at length, and saw his gaze fixed on the two who were near the piano. Osborne was saying something eagerly to Cynthia, whose grave eyes were upturned to him with soft intentness of expression, and her pretty mouth half-open, with a sort of impatience for him to cease speaking, that she might reply.

"They are talking about France," said Roger, in answer to Molly's unspoken question. "Osborne knows it well, and Miss Kirkpatrick has been at school there, you know. It sounds very interesting; shall we go nearer and hear what they are saying?"

It was all very well to ask this civilly, but Molly thought it would have been better to wait for her answer. Instead of waiting, however, Roger went to the piano, and, leaning on it, appeared to join in the light merry talk, while he feasted his eyes as much as he dared by looking at Cynthia. Molly suddenly felt as if she could scarcely keep from crying — a minute ago he had been so near to her, and talking so pleasantly and confidentially; and now he almost seemed as if he had forgotten her existence. She thought that all this was wrong; and she exaggerated its wrongness to herself; "mean," and "envious of Cynthia," and "ill-natured," and "selfish," were the terms she kept applying to herself, but

it did no good, she was just as naughty at the last as at the first.

Mrs. Gibson broke into the state of things which Molly thought was to endure for ever. Her work had been intricate up to this time, and had required a great deal of counting; so she had had no time to attend to her duties, one of which she always took to be to show herself to the world as an impartial stepmother. Cynthia had played and sung, and now she must give Molly her turn of exhibition. Cynthia's singing and playing was light and graceful, but anything but correct; but she herself was so charming, that it was only fanatics for music who cared for false chords and omitted notes. Molly, on the contrary, had an excellent ear, if she had ever been well taught; and both from inclination and conscientious perseverance of disposition, she would go over an incorrect passage for twenty times. But she was very shy of playing in company; and when forced to do it, she went through her performance heavily, and hated her handiwork more than any one.

"Now, you must play a little, Molly," said Mrs. Gibson; "play us that beautiful piece of Kalkbrenner's, my dear."

Molly looked up at her stepmother with beseeching eyes; but it only brought out another form of request, still more like a command.

"Go at once, my dear. You may not play it quite rightly; and I know you are very nervous; but you're quite amongst friends."

So there was a disturbance made in the little group at the piano, and Molly sat down to her martyrdom.

"Please, go away!" said she to Osborne, who was standing behind her ready to turn over. "I can quite well do it for myself. And oh! if you would but talk!"

Osborne remained where he was in spite of her appeal, and gave her what little approval she got; for Mrs. Gibson, exhausted by her previous labour of counting her stitches, fell asleep in her comfortable sofa-corner near the fire; and Roger, who began at first to talk a little in compliance with Molly's request, found his *tête-à-tête* with Cynthia so agreeable, that Molly lost her place several times in trying to catch a sudden glimpse of Cynthia sitting at her work, and Roger by her, intent on catching her low replies to what he was saying.

"There, now I've done!" said Molly, standing up quickly as soon as she had finished the eighteen dreary pages; "and



"I think I will never sit down to play again!"

Osborne laughed at her vehemence. Cynthia began to take some part in what was being said, and thus made the conversation general. Mrs. Gibson awakened up gracefully, as was her way of doing all things, and slid into the subjects they were talking about so easily, that she almost succeeded in making them believe she had never been asleep at all.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## HOLLINGFORD IN A BUSTLE.

ALL Hollingford felt as if there was a great deal to be done before Easter this year. There was Easter proper, which always required new clothing of some kind, for fear of certain consequences from little birds, who were supposed to resent the impiety of those who do not wear some new article of dress on Easter-day. And most ladies considered it wiser that the little birds should see the new article for themselves, and not have to take it upon trust, as they would have to do if it were merely a pocket-handkerchief, or a petticoat, or any article of under-clothing. So piety demanded a new bonnet, or a new gown; and was barely satisfied with an Easter pair of gloves. Miss Rose was generally very busy just before Easter in Hollingford. Then this year there was the charity ball. Ashcombe, Hollingford, and Coreham were three neighbouring towns, of about the same number of population, lying at the three equidistant corners of a triangle. In imitation of greater cities with their festivals, these three towns had agreed to have an annual ball for the benefit of the county hospital to be held in turn at each place; and Hollingford was to be the place this year.

It was a fine time for hospitality, and every house of any pretension was as full as it could hold, and frys were engaged long months before.

If Mrs. Gibson could have asked Osborne, or in default, Roger Hamley to go to the ball with them and to sleep at their house, — or if, indeed, she could have picked up any stray scion of a "county family" to whom such an offer would have been a convenience, she would have restored her own dressing-room to its former use as the spare-room, with pleasure. But she did not think it was worth her while to put herself out for any of the humdrum and ill-dressed women who had been her former

acquaintance at Ashcombe. For Mr. Preston it might have been worth while to give up her room, considering him in the light of a handsome and prosperous young man, and a good dancer besides. But there were more lights in which he was to be viewed. Mr. Gibson, who really wanted to return the hospitality shown to him by Mr. Preston at the time of his marriage, had yet an instinctive distaste to the man, which no wish of freeing himself from obligation, nor even the more worthy feeling of hospitality, could overcome. Mrs. Gibson had some old grudges of her own against him, but she was not one to retain angry feelings, or be very active in her retaliation; she was afraid of Mr. Preston, and admired him at the same time. It was awkward too — so she said — to go into a ball-room without any gentleman at all, and Mr. Gibson was so uncertain! On the whole — partly for this last-given reason, and partly because conciliation was the best policy, Mrs. Gibson was slightly in favour of inviting Mr. Preston to be their guest. But as soon as Cynthia heard the question discussed — or rather, as soon as she heard it discussed in Mr. Gibson's absence, she said that if Mr. Preston came to be their visitor on the occasion, she for one would not go to the ball at all. She did not speak with vehemence or in anger; but with such quiet resolution that Molly looked up in surprise. She saw that Cynthia was keeping her eyes fixed on her work, and that she had no intention of meeting any one's gaze, or giving any further explanation. Mrs. Gibson, too, looked perplexed, and once or twice seemed on the point of asking some question; but she was not angry as Molly had fully expected. She watched Cynthia furtively and in silence for a minute or two, and then said that after all she could not conveniently give up her dressing-room; and altogether, they had better say no more about it. So no stranger was invited to stay at Mr. Gibson's at the time of the ball; but Mrs. Gibson openly spoke of her regret at the unavoidable inhospitality, and hoped that they might be able to build an addition to their house before the triennial Hollingford ball.

Another cause of unusual bustle at Hollingford this Easter was the expected return of the family to the Towers, after their unusually long absence. Mr. Sheepshanks might be seen trotting up and down on his stout old cob, speaking to attentive masons, plasterers, and glaziers about putting everything — on the outside at least — about the cottages belonging to "my lord," in perfect order.

fect repair. Lord Cumnor owned the greater part of the town; and those who lived under other landlords, or in houses of their own, were stirred up by the dread of contrast to do up their dwellings. So the ladders of whitewashers and painters were sadly in the way of the ladies tripping daintily along to make their purchases, and holding their gowns up in a bunch behind, after a fashion quite gone out in these days. The housekeeper and steward from the Towers might also be seen coming in to give orders at the various shops; and stopping here and there at those kept by favourites, to avail themselves of the eagerly-tendered refreshments.

Lady Harriet came to call on her old governess the day after the arrival of the family at the Towers. Molly and Cynthia were out walking when she came—doing some errands for Mrs. Gibson, who had a secret idea that Lady Harriet would call at the particular time she did, and had a not uncommon wish to talk to her ladyship without the corrective presence of any member of her own family.

Mrs. Gibson did not give Molly the message of remembrance that Lady Harriet had left for her; but she imparted various pieces of news relating to the Towers with great animation and interest. The Duchess of Menteith and her daughter, Lady Alice, were coming to the Towers; would be there the day of the ball; would come to the ball; and the Menteith diamonds were famous. That was piece of news the first. The second was that ever so many gentlemen were coming to the Towers—some English, some French. This piece of news would have come first in order of importance had there been much probability of their being dancing men, and, as such, possible partners at the coming ball. But Lady Harriet had spoken of them as Lord Hollingford's friends, useless scientific men in all probability. Then, finally, Mrs. Gibson was to go to the Towers next day to lunch; Lady Cumnor had written a little note by Lady Harriet to beg her to come; if Mrs. Gibson could manage to find her way to the Towers, one of the carriages in use should bring her back to her own home in the course of the afternoon.

"The dear countess!" said Mrs. Gibson, with soft affection. It was a soliloquy, uttered after a minute's pause, at the end of all this information.

And all the rest of that day her conversation had an aristocratic perfume hanging about it. One of the few books she had brought with her into Mr. Gibson's house was bound in pink, and in it she studied

"Menteith, Duke of, Adolphus George," &c. &c., till she was fully up in all the Duchess's connections, and probable interests. Mr. Gibson made his mouth up into a droll whistle when he came home at night, and found himself in a Towers' atmosphere. Molly saw the shade of annoyance through the drollery; she was beginning to see it oftener than she liked, not that she reasoned upon it, or that she consciously traced the annoyance to its source; but she could not help feeling uneasy in herself when she knew father was in the least put out.

Of course a fly was ordered for Mrs. Gibson. In the early afternoon she came home, if she had been disappointed in her interview with the countess she never told her woe, nor revealed the fact that when she first arrived at the Towers she had to wait for an hour in Lady Cumnor's morning-room, uncheered by any companionship save that of her old friend Mrs. Bradley, till suddenly, Lady Harriet coming in, she exclaimed, "Why, Clare! you dear woman! are you here all alone? Does mamma know?" And, after a little more affectionate conversation, she rushed to find her ladyship, perfectly aware of the fact, but too deep in giving the duchess the benefit of her wisdom and experience in trousseaux, to be at all aware of the length of time Mrs. Gibson had been passing in patient solitude. At lunch Mrs. Gibson was secretly hurt by my lord's supposing it to be her dinner, and calling out his urgent hospitality from the very bottom of the table, giving as a reason for it, that she must remember it was her dinner. In vain she piped out in her soft, high voice, "Oh, anything at lunch." Her voice was lost, and the duchess might go away with the idea that the Hollingford doctor's wife dined early; that is to say, if her grace ever condescended to have any idea on the subject at all; which presupposes that she was cognizant of the fact of there being a doctor at Hollingford, and that he had a wife, and that his wife was the pretty, faded, elegant-looking woman sending away her plate of untasted food—food that she longed to eat, for she was really, desperately hungry after her drive and her solitude.

And then, after lunch, there did come a *tête-à-tête* with Lady Cumnor, which was conducted after this wise:—

"Well, Clare! I am really glad to see you. I once thought I should never get back to the Towers, but here I am! There was such a clever man at Bath—a Dr. Snape—he cured me at last—quite set me up. I really think if ever I am ill again I shall send for him: It is such a thing to find

a really clever medical man. Oh, by the way, I always forget you've married Mr. Gibson — of course he is very clever, and all that. (The carriage to the door in ten minutes, Brown, and desire Bradley to bring my things down.) What was I asking you? Oh! how do you get on with the step-daughter. She seemed to me to be a young lady with a pretty stubborn will of her own. I put a letter for the post down somewhere, and I cannot think where; do help me to look for it, there's a good woman. Just run to my room, and see if Brown can find it, for it is of great consequence."

Off went Mrs. Gibson rather unwillingly; for there were several things she had wanted to speak about, and she had not heard half of what she had expected to learn of the family gossip. But all chance was gone; for when she came back from her fruitless errand, Lady Cumnor and the duchess were in full talk, Lady Cumnor with the missing letter in her hand, which she was using something like a baton to enforce her words.

"Every iota from Paris! Every i-o-ta!"

Lady Cumnor was too much of a lady not to apologize for useless trouble, but they were nearly the last words she spoke to Mrs. Gibson, for she had to go out and drive with the duchess; and the brougham to take "Clare" (as she persisted in calling Mrs. Gibson) back to Hollingford, followed the carriage to the door. Lady Harriet came away from her entourage of young men and young ladies all prepared for some walking expedition to wish Mrs. Gibson good-by.

"We shall see you at the ball," she said.

"You'll be there with your two girls, of course, I must have a little talk with you there; with all these visitors in the house, it has been impossible to see anything of you to-day, you know."

Such were the facts, but rose-colour was the medium through which they were seen by Mrs. Gibson's household listeners on her return.

"There are many visitors staying at the Towers — oh, yes! a great many: the duchess and Lady Alice, and Mr. and Mrs. Gray, and Lord Albert Monson and his sisters, and my old friend Captain James of the Blues — many more, in fact. But of course I preferred going to Lady Cumnor's own room, where I could see her and Lady Harriet quietly, and where we were not disturbed by the bustle downstairs. Of course we were obliged to go down to lunch, and then I saw my old friends, and renewed pleasant acquaintances. But I really could hardly get any connected conversation with any one. Lord Cumnor seemed so delighted to see me there

again: though there were six or seven between us, he was always interrupting with some civil or kind speech especially addressed to me. And after lunch Lady Cumnor asked me all sorts of questions about my new life with as much interest as if I had been her daughter. To be sure, when the duchess came in we had to leave off, and talk about the trousseau she is preparing for Lady Alice. Lady Harriet made such a point of our meeting at the ball; she is such a good, affectionate creature, is Lady Harriet!"

This last was said in a tone of meditative appreciation.

The afternoon of the day on which the ball was to take place, a servant rode over from Hamley with two lovely nosegays, "with the Mr. Hamleys' compliments to Miss Gibson and Miss Kirkpatrick." Cynthia was the first to receive them. She came dancing into the drawing-room, flourishing the flowers about in either hand, and danced up to Molly, who was trying to settle to her reading, by way of passing the time away till the evening came.

"Look, Molly, look! Here are bouquets for us! Long life to the givers!"

"Who are they from?" asked Molly, taking hold of one, and examining it with tender delight at its beauty.

"Who from? Why, the two paragons of Hamleys to be sure! Is it not a pretty attention?"

"How kind of them!" said Molly.

"I'm sure it is Osborne who thought of it. He has been so much abroad, where it is such a common compliment to send bouquets to young ladies!"

"I don't see why you should think it is Osborne's thought!" said Molly, reddening a little. "Mr. Roger Hamley used to gather nosegays constantly for his mother, and sometimes for me."

"Well, never mind whose thought it was, or who gathered them; we've got the flowers, and that's enough. Molly, I'm sure these red flowers will just match your coral necklace and bracelets," said Cynthia, pulling out some camelias, then a rare kind of flower.

"Oh, please, don't!" exclaimed Molly. "Don't you see how carefully the colours are arranged — they have taken such pains, please, don't!"

"Nonsense!" said Cynthia, continuing to pull them out; "see, here are quite enough. I'll make a little coronet of them — sown on black velvet, which will never be seen — just as they do in France!"

"Oh, I am so sorry! It is quite spoilt," said Molly.

"Never mind! I'll take this spoilt bouquet; I can make it up again just as prettily as ever; and you shall have this, which has never been touched." Cynthia went on arranging the crimson buds and flowers to her taste. Molly said nothing, but kept on watching Cynthia's nimble fingers tying up the wreath.

"There," said Cynthia, at last, "when that is sown on black velvet, to keep the flowers from dying, you'll see how pretty it will look. And there are enough red flowers in this untouched nosegay to carry out the idea!"

"Thank you" (very slowly). "But shan't you mind having only the wrecks of the other?"

"Not I; red flowers would not go with my pink dress."

"But—I daresay they arranged each nosegay so carefully!"

"Perhaps he did. But I never would allow sentiment to interfere with my choice of colours; and pink does tie one down. Now you, in white muslin, just tipped with crimson, like a daisy, may wear anything."

Cynthia took the utmost pains in dressing Molly, leaving the clever housemaid to her mother's exclusive service. Mrs. Gibson was more anxious about her attire than was either of the girls; it had given her occasion for deep thought and not a few sighs. Her deliberation had ended in her wearing her pearl-gray satin wedding-gown, with a profusion of lace, and white and coloured lilacs. Cynthia was the one who took the affair the most lightly. Molly looked upon the ceremony of dressing for a first ball as rather a serious ceremony; certainly as an anxious proceeding. Cynthia was almost as anxious as herself; only Molly wanted her appearance to be correct and unnoticed; and Cynthia was desirous of setting off Molly's rather peculiar charms—her cream-coloured skin, her profusion of curly black hair, her beautiful long-shaped eyes, with their shy, loving expression. Cynthia took up so much time in dressing Molly to her mind, that she herself had to perform her toilette in a hurry. Molly ready dressed, sat on a low chair in Cynthia's room watching the pretty creature's rapid movements, as she stood in her petticoat before the glass doing up her hair, with quick certainty of effect. At length, Molly, heaved a long sigh, and said,—

"I should like to be pretty!"

"Why, Molly," said Cynthia, turning round with an exclamation on the tip of her tongue; but when she caught the innocent,

wistful look on Molly's face, she instinctively checked what she was going to say, and, half-smiling to her own reflection in the glass, she said,— "The French girls would tell you to believe that you were pretty would make you so."

Molly paused before replying,—

"I suppose they would mean that if you knew you were pretty, you would never think about your looks; you would be so certain of being liked, and that it is caring"—

"Listen! that's eight o'clock striking. Don't trouble yourself with trying to interpret a French girl's meaning, but help me on with my frock, there's a dear one."

The two girls were dressed, and were standing over the fire waiting for the carriage in Cynthia's room, when Maria (Betty's successor) came hurrying into the room. Maria had been officiating as maid to Mrs. Gibson, but she had had intervals of leisure, in which she had rushed upstairs, and, under the pretence of offering her services, she had seen the young ladies' dresses, and the sight of so many nice clothes had sent her into a state of excitement which made her think nothing of rushing upstairs for the twentieth time, with a nosegay still more beautiful than the two previous ones.

"Here, Miss Kirkpatrick! No, it's not for you, miss!" as Molly, being nearer to the door, offered to take it and pass it to Cynthia. "It's for Miss Kirkpatrick; and there's a note for her besides!"

Cynthia said nothing, but took the note and the flowers. She held the note so that Molly could read it at the same time she did.

I send you some flowers; and you must allow me to claim the first dance after nine o'clock, before which time I fear I cannot arrive. — C. P.

"Who is it?" asked Molly.

Cynthia looked extremely irritated, indignant, perplexed—what was it turned her cheek so pale, and made her eyes so full of fire?

"It is Mr. Preston," said she, in answer to Molly. "I shall not dance with him; and here go his flowers"—

Into the very middle of the embers, which she immediately stirred down upon the beautiful shining petals as if she wished to annihilate them as soon as possible. Her voice had never been raised; it was as sweet as usual; nor, though her movements were prompt enough, were they hasty or violent.



"Oh!" said Molly, "those beautiful flowers! We might have put them in water."

"No," said Cynthia; "it's best to destroy them. We don't want them; and I can't bear to be reminded of that man."

"It was an impertinent familiar note," said Molly. "What right had he to express himself in that way—no beginning, no end, and only initials. Did you know him well when you were at Ashcombe, Cynthia?"

"Oh, don't let us think any more about him," replied Cynthia. "It is quite enough to spoil any pleasure at the ball to think that he will be there. But I hope I shall get engaged before he comes, so that I can't dance with him—and don't you, either!"

"There! they are calling for us," exclaimed Molly, and with quick step, yet careful of their draperies, they made their way downstairs to the place where Mr. and Mrs. Gibson awaited them. Yes: Mr. Gibson was going; even if he had to leave them afterwards to attend to any professional call. And Molly suddenly began to admire her father as a handsome man, when she saw him now, in full evening attire. Mrs. Gibson, too—how pretty she was! In short, it was true that no better-looking party than these four people entered the Hollingford ball-room that evening.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

##### A CHARITY BALL.

At the present time there are few people at a public ball besides the dancers and their chaperones, or relations in some degree interested in them. But in the days when Molly and Cynthia were young—before railroads were, and before their consequences, the excursion-trains which take every one up to London now-a-days, there to see their fill of gay crowds and fine dresses—to go to an annual charity-ball, even though all thought of dancing had passed by years ago, and without any of the responsibilities of a chaperone, was a very allowable and favourite piece of dissipation to all the kindly old maids who thronged the country towns of England. They aired their old lace and their best dresses; they saw the aristocratic magnates of the country side; they gossiped with their coëvals, and speculated on the romances of the young around them in a curious yet friendly spirit. The Miss Brownings would have thought themselves sadly defrauded of the gayest event of the year, if anything had prevent-

ed their attending the charity-ball, and Miss Browning would have been indignant, Miss Phoebe aggrieved, had they not been asked to Ashcombe and Coreham, by friends at each place, who had, like them, gone through the dancing stage of life some five-and-twenty years before, but who liked still to haunt the scenes of their former employment, and see a younger generation dance on "regardless of their doom." They had come in one of the two sedan-chairs that yet lingered in use at Hollingford; such a night as this brought a regular harvest of gains to the two old men who, in what was called the "town's livery," trotted backwards and forwards with their many loads of ladies and finery. There were some post-chaises, and some "flys," but after mature deliberation Miss Browning had decided to keep to the more comfortable custom of the sedan-chair; "which," as she said to Miss Piper, one of her visitors, "came into the parlour, and got full of the warm air, and nipped you up, and carried you tight and cosy into another warm room, where you could walk out without having to show your legs by going up steps, or down steps." Of course only one could go at a time; but here again a little of Miss Browning's good management arranged everything so very nicely, as Miss Hornblower (their other visitor) remarked. She went first, and remained in the warm cloak-room until her hostess followed; and then the two ladies went arm-in-arm into the ball-room, finding out convenient seats whence they could watch the arrivals and speak to their passing friends, until Miss Phoebe and Miss Piper entered, and came to take possession of the seats reserved for them by Miss Browning's care. These two younger ladies came in, also arm-in-arm, but with a certain timid flurry in look and movement very different from the composed dignity of their seniors (by two or three years). When all four were once more assembled together, they took breath, and began to converse.

"Upon my word, I really do think this is a better room than our Ashcombe Court-house!"

"And how prettily it is decorated!" piped out Miss Piper. "How well the roses are made! But you all have such taste at Hollingford."

"There's Mrs. Dempster," cried Miss Hornblower; "she said she and her two daughters were asked to stay at Mr. Sheepshanks'. Mr. Preston was to be there, too; but I suppose they could not all come at once. Look! and there is young Roscoe, our new doctor. I declare it seems as if all

Ashcombe were here. Mr. Roscoe! Mr. Roscoe! come here and let me introduce you to Miss Browning, the friends we are staying with. We think very highly of our young doctor, I can assure you, Miss Browning."

Mr. Roscoe bowed, and simpered at hearing his own praises. But Miss Browning had no notion of having any doctor praised, who had come to settle on the very verge of Mr. Gibson's practice, so she said to Miss Hornblower, —

"You must be glad, I am sure, to have somebody you can call in, if you are in any sudden hurry, or for things that are too trifling to trouble Mr. Gibson about; and I should think Mr. Roscoe would feel it a great advantage to profit, as he will naturally have the opportunity of doing, by witnessing Mr. Gibson's skill!"

Probably Mr. Roscoe would have felt more aggrieved by this speech than he really was, if his attention had not been called off just then by the entrance of the very Mr. Gibson who was being spoken of. Almost before Miss Browning had ended her severe and depreciatory remarks, he had asked his friend Miss Hornblower, —

"Who is that lovely girl in pink, just come in?"

"Why, that's Cynthia Kirkpatrick!" said Miss Hornblower, taking up a ponderous gold eyeglass to make sure of her fact. "How she has grown! To be sure it is two or three years since she left Ashcombe — she was very pretty then — people did say Mr. Preston admired her very much; but she was so young!"

"Can you introduce me?" asked the impatient young surgeon. "I should like to ask her to dance."

When Miss Hornblower returned from her greeting to her former acquaintance, Mrs. Gibson, and had accomplished the introduction which Mr. Roscoe had requested she began her little confidences to Miss Browning.

"Well, to be sure! How condescending we are! I remember the time when Mrs. Kirkpatrick wore old black silks, and was thankful and civil as became her place as a schoolmistress, and as having to earn her bread. And now she is in a satin; and she speaks to me as if she just could recollect who I was, if she tried very hard! It isn't so long ago since Mrs. Dempster came to consult me as to whether Mrs. Kirkpatrick would be offended, if she sent her a new breadth for her lilac silk-gown, in place of one that had been spoilt by Mrs. Dempster's servant spilling the coffee over

it the night before; and she took it and was thankful, for all she's dressed in pearl-grey satin now! And she would have been glad enough to marry Mr. Preston in those days."

"I thought you said he admired her daughter," put in Miss Browning to her irritated friend.

"Well! perhaps I did, and perhaps it was so; I am sure I can't tell; he was a great deal at the house. Miss Dixon keeps a school in the same house now, and I am sure she does it a great deal better."

"The earl and the countess are very fond of Mrs. Gibson," said Miss Browning. "I know, for Lady Harriet told us when she came to drink tea with us last autumn; and they desired Mr. Preston to be very attentive to her when she lived at Ashcombe."

"For goodness' sake don't go and repeat what I've been saying about Mr. Preston and Mrs. Kirkpatrick to her ladyship. One may be mistaken, and you know I only said 'people talked about it.'"

Miss Hornblower was evidently alarmed lest her gossip should be repeated to the Lady Harriet, who appeared to be on such an intimate footing with her Hollingsford friends. Nor did Miss Browning dissipate the illusion. Lady Harriet had drunk tea with them, and might do it again; and, at any rate, the little fright she had put her friend into was not a bad return for that praise of Mr. Roscoe, which had offended Miss Browning's loyalty to Mr. Gibson.

Meanwhile Miss Piper and Miss Phæbe, who had not the character of *esprit-forts* to maintain, talked of the dresses of the people present, beginning by complimenting each other.

"What a lovely turban you have got on, Miss Piper, if I may be allowed to say so: so becoming to your complexion!"

"Do you think so?" said Miss Piper, with ill-concealed gratification; it was something to have a "complexion" at forty-five. "I got it at Brown's, at Somerton, for this very ball. I thought I must have something to set off my gown, which isn't quite so new as it once was; and I have no handsome jewelry like you" — looking with admiring eyes at a large miniature set round with pearls, which served as a shield to Miss Phæbe's breast.

"It is handsome," that lady replied. It is a likeness of my dear mother; Dorothy has got my father on. The miniatures were both taken at the same time; and just about then my uncle died and left us each a legacy of fifty pounds, which we agreed to

spend on the setting of our miniatures. But because they are so valuable Dorothy always keeps them locked up with the best silver, and hides the box somewhere; she never will tell me where, because she says I've such weak nerves, and that if a burglar, with a loaded pistol at my head, were to ask me where we kept our plate and jewels, I should be sure to tell him; and she says, for her part, she would never think of revealing under any circumstances. (I'm sure I hope she won't be tried.) But that's the reason I don't wear it often; it's only the second time I've had it on; and I can't even get at it, and look at it, which I should like to do. I shouldn't have had it on to-night, but that Dorothy gave it out to me, saying it was but a proper compliment to pay to the Duchess of Menteith, who is to be here in all her diamonds."

"Dear-ah-me! Is she really! Do you know I never saw a duchess before." And Miss Piper drew herself up and craned her neck, as if resolved to "behave herself properly," as she had been taught to do at boarding-school thirty years before, in the presence of "her grace." By-and-by she said to Miss Phoebe, with a sudden jerk out of position, — "Look, look! that's our Mr. Cholmley, the magistrate (he was the great man of Coreham), and that's Mrs. Cholmley in red satin, and Mr. George and Mr. Harry from Oxford, I do declare: and Miss Cholmley, and pretty Miss Sophy. I should like to go and speak to them, but then it's so formidable crossing a room without a gentleman. And there is Coxie the butcher and his wife! Why, all Coreham seems to be here! And how Mrs. Coxie can afford such a gown I can't make out for one, for I know Coxie had some difficulty in paying for the last sheep he bought of my brother."

Just at this moment the band, consisting of two violins, a harp, and an occasional clarionet, having finished their tuning, and brought themselves as nearly into accord as was possible, struck up a brisk country-dance, and partners quickly took their places. Mrs. Gibson was secretly a little annoyed at Cynthia's being one of those to stand up in this early dance, the performers in which were principally the punctual plebeians of Hollingford, who, when a ball was fixed to begin at eight, had no notion of being later, and so losing part of the amusement for which they had paid their money. She imparted some of her feelings to Molly, sitting by her, longing to dance, and beating time to the spirited music with one of her pretty little feet.

"Your dear papa is always so very punctual!

To-night it seems almost a pity, for we really are here before there is any one come that we know."

"Oh! I see so many people here that I know. There are Mr. and Mrs. Smeaton, and that nice good-tempered daughter."

"Oh! booksellers and butchers if you will."

"Papa has found a great many friends to talk to."

"Patients, my dear — hardly friends. There are some nice-looking people here," catching her eye on the Cholmleys; but I daresay they have driven over from the neighbourhood of Ashcombe or Coreham, and have hardly calculated how soon they would get here. I wonder when the Towers party will come. Ah! there's Mr. Ashton, and Mr. Preston. Come, the room is beginning to fill."

So it was, for this was to be a very good ball, people said; and a large party from the Towers was coming, and a duchess in diamonds among the number. Every great house in the district was expected to be full of guests on these occasions; but, at this early hour, the townspeople had the floor almost entirely to themselves; the county magnates came dropping in later; and chiefest among them all was the lord-lieutenant from the Towers. But to-night they were unusually late, and the aristocratic ozone being absent from the atmosphere, there was a flatness about the dancing of all those who considered themselves above the plebeian ranks of the tradespeople. They, however, enjoyed themselves thoroughly, and sprang and pounded till their eyes sparkled and their cheeks glowed with exercise and excitement. Some of the more prudent parents, mindful of the next day's duties, began to consider at what hour they ought to go home; but with all there was an expressed or unexpressed curiosity to see the duchess and her diamonds; for the Menteith diamonds were famous in higher circles than that now assembled; and their fame had trickled down to it through the medium of ladies-maids and housekeepers. Mr. Gibson had had to leave the ball-room for a time, as he had anticipated, but he was to return to his wife as soon as his duties were accomplished; and, in his absence, Mrs. Gibson kept herself a little aloof from the Miss Brownings and those of her acquaintance who would willingly have entered into conversation with her, with a view of attaching herself to the skirts of the Towers' party, when they should make their appearance. If Cynthia would not be so very ready in engaging

herself to every possible partner who asked her to dance, there were sure to be young men staying at the Towers who would be on the look-out for pretty girls: and who could tell to what a dance would lead? Molly, too, though a less good dancer than Cynthia, and, from her timidity, less graceful and easy, was becoming engaged pretty deeply; and, it must be confessed, she was longing to dance every dance, no matter with whom. Even she might not be available for the more aristocratic partners Mrs. Gibson anticipated. She was feeling very much annoyed with the whole proceedings of the evening when she was aware of some one standing by her; and, turning a little to one side, she saw Mr. Preston keeping guard, as it were, over the seats which Molly and Cynthia had just quitted. He was looking so black that, if their eyes had not met, Mrs. Gibson would have preferred not speaking to him; as it was, she thought it unavoidable.

"The rooms are not well-lighted to-night, are they, Mr. Preston?"

"No," said he; "but who could light such dingy old paint as this, loaded with evergreens, too, which always darkens a room."

"And the company, too! I always think that freshness and brilliancy of dress go as far as anything to brighten up a room. Look what a set of people are here; the greater part of the women are dressed in dark silks, really only fit for a morning. The place will be quite different by and by, when the county families are in a little more force."

Mr. Preston made no reply. He had put his glass in his eye, apparently for the purpose of catching the dancers. If its exact direction could have been ascertained, it would have been found that he was looking intently and angrily on a flying figure in pink muslin: many a one was gazing at Cynthia with intentness besides himself, but no one in anger. Mrs. Gibson was not so fine an observer as to read all this; but here was a gentlemanly and handsome young man, to whom she could prattle, instead of either joining herself on to objectionable people, or sitting all forlorn until the Towers' party came. So she went on with her small remarks.

"You are not dancing, Mr. Preston!"

"No! The partner I had engaged has made some mistake. I am waiting to have an explanation with her."

Mrs. Gibson was silent. An uncomfortable tide of recollections appeared to come over her; she, like Mr. Preston, watched

Cynthia; the dance was ended, and she was walking round the room in easy unconcern as to what might await her. Presently her partner, Mr. Harry Cholmley, brought her back to her seat. She took that vacant next to Mr. Preston, leaving that by her mother for Molly's occupation. The latter returned a moment afterwards to her place. Cynthia seemed entirely unconscious of Mr. Preston's neighbourhood. Mrs. Gibson leaned forwards, and said to her daughter, —

"Your last partner was a gentleman, my dear. You are improving in your selection. I really was ashamed of you before, figuring away with that attorney's clerk. Molly, do you know whom you have been dancing with? I have found out that he is the Coreham bookseller."

"That accounts for his being so well up in all the books I have been wanting to hear about," said Molly eagerly, but with a spice of malice in her mind. "He really was very pleasant, mamma," she added; and he looks quite a gentleman, and dances beautifully!"

"Very well. But remember if you go on this way you will have to shake hands over the counter to-morrow morning with some of your partners of to-night," said Mrs. Gibson coldly.

"But I really don't know how to refuse when people are introduced to me and ask me, and I am longing to dance. You know to-night it is a charity-ball, and papa said everybody danced with everybody," said Molly in a pleading tone of voice; for she could not quite and entirely enjoy herself if she was out of harmony with any one. What reply Mrs. Gibson would have made to this speech cannot now be ascertained, for, before she could make reply, Mr. Preston stepped a little forwards, and said, in a tone which he meant to be icily indifferent, but which trembled with anger, —

"If Miss Gibson finds any difficulty in refusing a partner, she has only to apply to Miss Kirkpatrick for instructions."

Cynthia lifted up her beautiful eyes, and fixing them on Mr. Preston's face, said, very quietly, as if only stating a matter of fact.

"You forget, I think, Mr. Preston: Miss Gibson implied that she wished to dance with the person who asked her — that makes all the difference. I can't instruct her how to act in that difficulty."

And to the rest of this little conversation, Cynthia appeared to lend no ear; and she was almost directly claimed by her next partner. Mr. Preston took the seat now left empty much to Molly's annoyance. At first she feared lest he should be going to ask



her to dance; but instead, he put out his hand for Cynthia's nosegay, which she had left on rising, entrusted to Molly. It had suffered considerably from the heat of the room, and was no longer full and fresh; not so much so as Molly's, which had not, in the first instance, been pulled to pieces in picking out the scarlet flowers which now adorned Molly's hair, and which had since been cherished with more care. Enough, however, remained of Cynthia's to show very distinctly that it was not the one Mr. Preston had sent; and it was perhaps to convince himself of this, that he rudely asked to examine it. But Molly, faithful to what she imagined would be Cynthia's wish, refused to allow him to touch it; she only held it a little nearer.

"Miss Kirkpatrick has not done me the honour of wearing the bouquet I sent her, I see. She received it, I suppose, and my note?"

"Yes," said Molly, rather intimidated by the tone in which this was said. "But we had already accepted these two nosegays."

Mrs. Gibson was just the person to come to the rescue with her honeyed words on such an occasion as the present. She evidently was rather afraid of Mr. Preston, and wished to keep at peace with him.

"Oh, yes, we were so sorry! Of course, I don't mean to say we could be sorry for any one's kindness; but two such lovely nosegays had been sent from Hamley Hall—you may see how beautiful from what Molly holds in her hand—and they had come before yours, Mr. Preston."

"I should have felt honoured if you had accepted of mine, since the young ladies were so well provided for. I was at some pains in selecting the flowers at Green's; I think I may say it was rather more *recherché* than that of Miss Kirkpatrick's, which Miss Gibson holds so tenderly and securely in her hand."

"Oh, because Cynthia would take out the most effective flowers to put in my hair!" exclaimed Molly, eagerly.

"Did she?" said Mr. Preston, with a certain accent of pleasure in his voice, as though he were glad she set so little store by the nosegay; and he walked off to stand behind Cynthia in the quadrille that was being danced; and Molly saw him making her reply to him—against her will, Molly was sure. But, somehow, his face and manner implied power over her. She looked grave, deaf, indifferent, indignant, defiant; but, after a half-whispered speech to Cynthia, at the conclusion of the dance,

she evidently threw him an impatient consent to what he was asking, for he walked off with a disagreeable smile of satisfaction on his handsome face.

All this time the murmurs were spreading at the lateness of the party from the Towers, and person after person came up to Mrs. Gibson as if she were the accredited authority as to the earl and countess's plans. In one sense this was flattering; but then the acknowledgment of common ignorance and wonder reduced her to the level of the inquirers. Mrs. Goodenough felt herself particularly aggrieved; she had had her spectacles on for the last hour and a half, in order to be ready for the sight the very first minute any one from the Towers appeared at the door.

"I had a headache," she complained, "and I should have sent my money, and never stirred out o' doors to-night; for I've seen a many of these here balls, and my lord and my lady too, when they were better worth looking at nor they are now; but every one was talking of the duchess, and the duchess and her diamonds, and I thought I shouldn't like to be behindhand, and never ha' seen neither the duchess nor her diamonds; so I'm here, and coal and candlelight wasting away at home, for I told Sally to sit up for me; and, above everything, I cannot abide waste. I took it from my mother, who was such a one against waste as you never see now-a-days. She was a manager, if ever there was a one; and brought up nine children on less than any one else could do, I'll be bound. Why! She wouldn't let us be extravagant—not even in the matter of colds. Whenever any on us had got a pretty bad cold, she took the opportunity and cut our hair; for she said, said she, it was of no use having two colds when one would do—and cutting of our hair was sure to give us a cold. But, for all that, I wish the duchess would come."

"Ah! but fancy what it is to me," sighed out Mrs. Gibson; "so long as I have been without seeing the dear family—and seeing so little of them the other day when I was at the Towers (for the duchess would have my opinion on Lady Alice's trousseau, and kept asking me so many questions it took up all the time)—and Lady Harriet's last words were a happy anticipation of our meeting to-night. It's nearly twelve o'clock."

Every one of any pretensions to gentility was painfully affected by the absence of the family from the Towers; the very sitters seemed unwilling to begin playing a

dance that might be interrupted by the entrance of the great folks. Miss Phœbe Browning had apologized for them—Miss Browning had blamed them with calm dignity; it was only the butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers who rather enjoyed the absence of restraint, and were happy and hilarious.

At last, there was a rumbling, and a rushing, and a whispering, and the music stopped, so the dancers were obliged to do so too, and in came Lord Cumnor in his state dress, with a fat, middle-aged woman on his arm; she was dressed almost like a girl,—in a sprigged muslin, with natural flowers in her hair, but not a vestige of a jewel or a diamond. Yet it must be the duchess; but what was a duchess without diamonds?—and in a dress which farmer Hodson's daughter might have worn! Was it the duchess? Could it be the duchess? The little crowd of inquirers around Mrs. Gibson thickened, to hear her confirm their disappointing surmise. After the duchess came Lady Cumnor, looking like Lady Macbeth in black velvet—a cloud upon her brow, made more conspicuous by the lines of age rapidly gathering on her handsome face; and Lady Harriet, and other ladies, amongst whom there was one dressed so like the duchess as to suggest the idea of a sister rather than a daughter, as far as dress went. There was Lord Hollingford, plain in face, awkward in person, gentlemanly in manner; and half-a-dozen young men, Lord Albert Monson, Captain James, and others of their age and standing, who came in looking anything if not critical. This long-expected party swept up to the seats reserved for them at the head of the room, apparently regardless of the interruption they caused; for the dancers stood aside, and almost dispersed back to their seats, and when "Money-musk" struck up again, not half the former set of people stood up to finish the dance.

Lady Harriet, who was rather different to Miss Piper, and no more minded crossing the room alone than if the lookers-on were so many cabbages, spied the Gibson party pretty quickly out, and came across to them.

"Here we are at last. How d'y'e do, dear? Why, little one (to Molly), how nice you're looking! Aren't we shamefully late?"

"Oh! it's only just past twelve," said Mrs. Gibson; "and I daresay you dined very late."

"It was not that; it was that ill-mannered woman, who went to her own room after we came out from dinner, and she and

Lady Alice stayed there invisible, till we thought they were putting on some splendid attire—as they ought to have done—and at half-past ten when mamma sent up to them to say the carriages were at the door, the duchess sent down for some beef-tea, and at last appeared à l'enfant as you see her. Mamma is so angry with her, and some of the others are annoyed at not coming earlier and one or two are giving themselves airs about coming at all. Papa is the only one who is not affected by it." Then turning to Molly, Lady Harriet asked,—

"Have you been dancing much, Miss Gibson?"

"Yes; not every dance, but nearly all."

It was a simple question enough; but Lady Harriet's speaking at all to Molly had become to Mrs Gibson almost like shaking a red rag at a bull; it was the one thing sure to put her out of temper. But she would not have shown this to Lady Harriet for the world; only she contrived to baffle any endeavours at further conversation between the two, by placing herself between Lady Harriet and Molly, whom the former asked to sit down in the absent Cynthia's room.

"I won't go back to those people, I am so mad with them; and, besides, I hardly saw you the other day, and I must have some gossip with you." So she sat down by Mrs. Gibson, and as Mrs. Goodenough afterwards expressed it, "looked like anybody else." Mrs. Goodenough said this to excuse herself for a little misadventure she fell into. She had taken a deliberate survey of the grandees at the upper end of the room, spectacles on nose, and had inquired, in no very measured voice, who everybody was, from Mr. Sheepshanks, my lord's agent, and her very good neighbour, who in vain tried to check her loud ardour for information by replying to her in whispers. But she was rather deaf as well as blind, so his low tones only brought upon him fresh inquiries. Now, satisfied as far as she could be, and on her way to departure, and the extinguishing of fire and candlelight, she stopped opposite to Mrs. Gibson, and thus addressed her by way of renewal of their former subject of conversation,—

"Such a shabby thing for a duchess I never saw; not a bit of a diamond near her. They're none of them worth looking at except the countess, and she's always a personable woman, and not so lusty as she was. But they're not worth waiting up for till this time o' night."

There was a moment's pause. Then Lady Harriet put her hand out, and said,—

"You don't remember me, but I know

you from having seen you at the Towers. Lady Cumnor is a good deal thinner than she was, but we hope her health is better for it."

"It's Lady Harriet," said Mrs. Gibson, to Mrs. Goodenough, in reproachful dismay.

"Deary me, your ladyship! I hope I've given no offence! But, you see—that is to say, your ladyship sees, that it's late hours for such folks as me, and I only stayed out of my bed to see the duchess, and I thought she'd come in diamonds and a coronet; and it puts one out at my age, to be disappointed in the only chance I'm like to have of so fine a sight."

"I'm put out too," said Lady Harriet. "I wanted to have come early, and here we are as late as this. I'm so cross and ill-tempered, I should be glad to hide myself in bed as soon as you will do."

She said this so sweetly that Mrs. Goodenough relaxed into a smile, and her crabbedness into a compliment.

"I don't believe as ever your ladyship can be cross and ill-tempered with that pretty face. I'm an old woman, so you must let me say so." Lady Harriet stood up, and made a low curtsy. Then holding out her hand, she said,—

"I won't keep you up any longer; but I'll promise one thing in return for your pretty speech: if ever I am a duchess, I'll come and show myself to you in all my robes and gewgaws. Good-night, madam!"

"There! I knew how it would be!" said she, not resuming her seat. "And on the eve of a county election too."

"Oh! you must not take old Mrs. Goodenough as a specimen, dear Lady Harriet. She is always a grumbler! I am sure no one else would complain of your all being as late as you liked," said Mrs. Gibson.

"What do you say, Molly?" said Lady Harriet, suddenly turning her eyes on Molly's face. "Don't you think we've lost some of our popularity—which at this time means votes—by coming so late. Come, answer me! you used to be a famous little truth-teller."

"I don't know about popularity or votes," said Molly, rather unwillingly. "But I think many people were sorry you did not come sooner; and isn't that rather a proof of popularity?" she added.

"That's a very neat and diplomatic answer," said Lady Harriet, smiling, and tapping Molly's cheek with her fan.

"Molly knows nothing about it," said Mrs. Gibson, a little off her guard. "It would be very impertinent if she or any one

else questioned Lady Cumnor's perfect right to come when she chose."

"Well, all I know is, I must go back to mamma now; but I shall make another raid into these regions by-and-by, and you must keep a place for me. Ah! there are—Miss Brownings; you see I don't forget my lesson, Miss Gibson."

"Molly, I cannot have you speaking so to Lady Harriet," said Mrs. Gibson, as soon as she was left alone with her step-daughter. "You would never have known her at all if it had not been for me, and don't be always putting yourself into our conversation."

"But I must speak if she asks me questions," pleaded Molly.

"Well! if you must, you must, I acknowledge. I'm candid about that at any rate. But there's no need for you to set up to have an opinion at your age."

"I don't know how to help it," said Molly.

"She's such a whimsical person; look there, if she's not talking to Miss Phoebe; and Miss Phoebe is so weak she'll be easily led away into fancying she is hand and glove with Lady Harriet. If there is one thing I hate more than another, it is the trying to make out an intimacy with great people."

Molly felt innocent enough, so she offered no justification of herself, and made no reply. Indeed she was more occupied in watching Cynthia. She could not understand the change that seemed to have come over the latter. She was dancing, it was true, with the same lightness and grace as before, but the smooth bounding motion as of a feather blown onwards by the wind was gone. She was conversing with her partner, but without the soft animation that usually shone out upon her countenance. And when she was brought back to her seat Molly noticed her changed colour, and her dreamily abstracted eyes.

"What is the matter, Cynthia?" asked she, in a very low voice.

"Nothing," said Cynthia, suddenly looking up, and in an accent of what was in her, sharpness. "Why should there be?"

"I don't know; but you look different to what you did—tired or something."

"There is nothing the matter, or, if there is, don't talk about it. It is all your fancy."

This was a rather contradictory speech, to be interpreted by intuition rather than by logic. Molly understood that Cynthia wished for quietness and silence. But what was her surprise, after the speeches that had passed before, and the implication of Cynthia's whole manner to Mr. Preston, to see

him come up, and, without a word, offer his arm to Cynthia and lead her off to dance. It appeared to strike Mrs. Gibson as something remarkable, for, forgetting her late passage at arms with Molly, she asked, wonderingly, as if almost distrusting the evidence of her senses, —

"Is Cynthia going to dance with Mr. Preston?"

Molly had scarcely time to answer before she herself was led off by her partner. She could hardly attend to him or to the figures of the quadrille for watching for Cynthia among the moving forms.

Once she caught a glimpse of her standing still — downcast — listening to Mr. Preston's eager speech. Again she was walking languidly among the dancers, almost as if she took no notice of those around her. When she and Molly joined each other again, the shade on Cynthia's face had deepened to gloom. But, at the same time, if a physiognomist had studied her expression, he would have read in it defiance and anger, and perhaps also a little perplexity. While the quadrille had been going on, Lady Harriet had been speaking to her brother.

"Hollingford!" she said, laying her hand on his arm, and drawing him a little apart from the well-born crowd amid which he stood, silent and abstracted, "you don't know how these good people here have been hurt and disappointed with our being so late, and with the duchess's ridiculous simplicity of dress."

"Why should they mind it?" asked he, taking advantage of her being out of breath with eagerness.

"Oh, don't be so wise and stupid; don't you see, we're a show and a spectacle — it's like having a pantomime with harlequin and columbine in plain clothes."

"I don't understand how" — he began.

"Then take it upon trust. They really are a little disappointed, whether they are logical or not in being so, and we must try and make it up to them; for one thing, because I can't bear our vassals to look dissatisfied and disloyal, and then there's the election in June."

"I really would as soon be out of the House as in it."

"Nonsense; it would grieve papa beyond measure — but there is no time to talk about that now. You must go and dance with some of the townspeople, and I'll ask Sheepshanks to introduce me to a respectable young farmer. Can't you get Captain James to make himself useful? There he goes with Lady Alice! If I don't get him introduced to the ugliest tailor's daughter I

can find for the next dance!" She put her arm in her brother's as she spoke, as if to lead him to some partner. He resisted, however — resisted piteously.

"Pray don't, Harriet. You know I can't dance. I hate it; I always did. I don't know how to get through a quadrille."

"It's a country dance!" said she, resolutely.

"It's all the same. And what shall I say to my partner? I haven't a notion: I shall have no subject in common. Speak of being disappointed, they'll be ten times more disappointed when they find I can neither dance nor talk!"

"I'll be merciful; don't be so cowardly. In their eyes a lord may dance like a bear — as some lords not very far from me are — if he likes, and they'll take it for grace. And you shall begin with Molly Gibson, your friend the doctor's daughter. She's a good, simple, intelligent little girl, which you'll think a great deal more of, I suppose, than of the frivolous fact of her being very pretty. Clare! will you allow me to introduce my brother to Miss Gibson? he hopes to engage her for this dance. Lord Hollingford, Miss Gibson!"

Poor Lord Hollingford! there was nothing for it but for him to follow his sister's very explicit lead, and Molly and he walked off to their places, each heartily wishing their dance together well over. Lady Harriet flew off to Mr Sheepshanks to secure her respectable young farmer, and Mrs. Gibson remained alone, wishing that Lady Cumnor would send one of her attendant gentlemen for her. It would be so much more agreeable to be sitting even at the sag-end of nobility than here on a bench with everybody; hoping that everybody would see Molly dancing away with a lord, yet vexed that the chance had so befallen that Molly instead of Cynthia was the young lady singled out; wondering if simplicity of dress was now become the highest fashion, and pondering on the possibility of cleverly inducing Lady Harriet to introduce Lord Albert Monson to her own beautiful daughter, Cynthia.

Molly found Lord Hollingford, the wise and learned Lord Hollingford, strangely stupid in understanding the mystery of "Cross hands and back again, down the middle and up again." He was constantly getting hold of the wrong hands, and as constantly stopping when he had returned to his place, quite unaware that the duties of society and the laws of the game required that he should go on capering till he had arrived at the bottom of the room. He



perceived that he had performed his part very badly, and apologized to Molly when once they had arrived at that haven of comparative peace, and he expressed his regret so simply and heartily that she felt at her ease with him at once, especially when he had confided to her his reluctance at having to dance at all, and his only doing it under his sister's compulsion. To Molly he was an elderly widower, almost as old as her father, and by-and-by they got into very pleasant conversation. She learnt from him that Roger Hamley had just been publishing a paper in some scientific periodical, which had excited considerable attention, as it was intended to confute some theory of a great French physiologist, and Roger's article proved the writer to be possessed of a most unusual amount of knowledge on the subject. This piece of news was of great interest to Molly, and, in her questions, she herself evinced so much intelligence, and a mind so well prepared for the reception of information, that Lord Hollingsford at any rate would have felt his quest of popularity a very easy affair indeed, if he might have gone on talking quietly to Molly during the rest of the evening. When he took her back to her place, he found Mr. Gibson there, and fell into talk with him, until Lady Harriet once more came to stir him up to his duties. Before very long, however, he returned to Mr. Gibson's side, and began telling him of this paper of Roger Hamley's, of which Mr. Gibson had not yet heard. In the midst of their conversation, as they stood close by Mrs. Gibson, Lord Hollingsford saw Molly in the distance, and interrupted himself to say, "What a charming little lady that daughter of yours is! Most girls of her age are so difficult to talk to; but she is intelligent and full of interest in all sorts of sensible things; well read, too—she was up in *Le Règne Animal*—and very pretty!"

Mr. Gibson bowed, much pleased at such a compliment from such a man, was he lord or not. It is very likely that if Molly had been a stupid listener, Lord Hollingsford would not have discovered her beauty, or the converse might be asserted—if she had not been young and pretty he would not have exerted himself to talk on scientific subjects in a manner which she could understand. But in whatever manner Molly had won his approbation and admiration, there was no doubt that she had earned it somehow. And, when she next returned to her

place, Mrs. Gibson greeted her with soft words and a gracious smile; for it does not require much reasoning power to discover that if it is a very fine thing to be mother-in-law to a very magnificent three-tailed bashaw, it pre-supposes that the wife who makes the connection between the two parties is in harmony with her mother. And so far had Mrs. Gibson's thoughts wandered into futurity. She only wished that the happy chance had fallen to Cynthia's instead of to Molly's lot. But Molly was a docile, sweet creature, very pretty, and remarkably intelligent, as my lord had said. It was a pity that Cynthia preferred making millinery to reading; but perhaps that could be rectified. And there was Lord Cumnor coming to speak to her, and Lady Cumnor nodding to her, and indicating a place by her side.

It was not an unsatisfactory ball upon the whole to Mrs. Gibson, although she paid the usual penalty for sitting up beyond her usual hour in perpetual glare and movement. The next morning she awoke irritable and fatigued; and a little of the same feeling oppressed both Cynthia and Molly. The former was lounging in the window-seat, holding a three-days-old newspaper in her hand, which she was making a pretence of reading, when she was startled by her mother's saying,—

"Cynthia! can't you take up a book and improve yourself. I am sure your conversation will never be worth listening to, unless you read something better than newspapers. Why don't you keep up your French? There was some French book that Molly was reading—*Le Règne Animal*, I think."

"No! I never read it!" said Molly, blushing. "Mr. Roger Hamley sometimes read pieces out of it when I was first at the Hall, and told me what it was about."

"Oh! well. Then I suppose I was mistaken. But it comes to all the same thing. Cynthia, you really must learn to settle yourself to some improving reading every morning."

Rather to Molly's surprise, Cynthia did not reply a word; but dutifully went and brought down from among her Boulogne school-books, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.* But after a while Molly saw that this "improving reading" was just as much a mere excuse for Cynthia's thinking her own thoughts as the newspaper had been.

## CHAPTER V.

## NOT SAFE AGAINST LOVE-MAKING.

"WHY don't you call him Will?" Clara said to her father. This question was asked on the evening of that Monday on which Mr. Amedroz had given his consent as to the marriage proposal.

"Call him Will! Why should I?"

"You used to do so, when he was a boy."

"Of course I did; but that is years ago. He would think it impertinent now."

"Indeed he would not; he would like it. He has told me so. It sounds so cold to him to be called Mr. Belton by his relations."

The father looked at his daughter as though for a moment he almost suspected that matters had really been arranged between her and her future lover without his concurrence, and before his sanction had been obtained. But if for a moment such a thought did cross his mind, it did not dwell there. He trusted Belton; but as to his daughter, he knew that he might be sure of her. It would be impossible with her to keep such a secret from him, even for half a day. And yet, how odd it was! Here was a man who in three days had fallen in love with his daughter; and here was his daughter apparently quite as ready to be in love with the man. How could she, who was ordinarily circumspect, and almost cold in her demeanour towards strangers, — who was from circumstances and from her own disposition altogether hostile to flirting intimacies, — how could his Clara have changed her nature so speedily? The squire did not understand it, but was prepared to believe that it was all for the best. "I'll call him Will, if you like it," said he.

"Do, papa, and then I can do so also. He is such a good fellow, and I am so fond of him."

On the next morning Mr. Amedroz did, with much awkwardness, call his guest by his Christian name. Clara caught her cousin's eye and smiled, and he also smiled. At that moment he was more in love than ever. Could anything be more charming than this. Immediately after breakfast he was going over to Redicote, to see a builder in a small way who lived there, and whom he proposed to employ in putting up the shed for the cattle; but he almost begrudged the time, so anxious was he to begin his suit. But his plan had been laid out and he would follow it. "I think I shall be back by three o'clock," he said to Clara, "and then we'll have our walk."

"I'll be ready; and you can call for me

at Mrs. Askerton's. I must go down there, and it will save you something in your walk to pick me up at the cottage." And so the arrangements for the day were made.

Clara had promised that she would soon call at the cottage, and was, indeed, rather anxious to see Mrs. Askerton on her own account. What she had heard from her cousin as to a certain Miss Vigo of old days had interested her, and also what she had heard of a certain Mr. Berdmore. It had been evident to her that her cousin had thought little about it. The likeness of the lady he then saw to the lady he had before known, had at first struck him; but when he found that the two ladies were not represented by one and the same person, he was satisfied, and there was an end of the matter for him. But it was not so with Clara. Her feminine mind dwelt on the matter with more earnestness than he had cared to entertain, and her clearer intellect saw possibilities which did not occur to him. But it was not till she found herself walking across the park to the cottage that she remembered that any inquiries as to her past life might be disagreeable to Mrs. Askerton. She had thought of asking her friend plainly whether the names of Vigo and Berdmore had ever been familiar to her; but she reminded herself that there had been rumours afloat, and that there might be a mystery. Mrs. Askerton would sometimes talk of her early life; but she would do this with dreamy, indistinct language, speaking of the sorrows of her girlhood, but not specifying their exact nature, seldom mentioning any names, and never referring with clear personality to those who had been nearest to her when she had been a child. Clara had seen her friend's maiden name, Mary Oliphant, written in a book, and seeing it had alluded to it. On that occasion Mrs. Askerton had spoken of herself as having been an Oliphant, and thus Clara had come to know the fact. But now, as she made her way to the cottage she remembered that she had learned nothing more than this as to Mrs. Askerton's early life. Such being the case, she hardly knew how to ask any question about the two names that had been mentioned. And yet, why should she not ask such a question? Why should she doubt Mrs. Askerton? And if she did doubt, why should not her doubts be solved?

She found Colonel Askerton and his wife together, and she certainly would ask no such question in his presence. He was a slight built, wiry man, about fifty, with iron-grey hair and beard, — who seemed to have

no trouble in life, and to desire but few pleasures. Nothing could be more regular than the course of his days, and nothing more idle. He breakfasted at eleven, smoked and read till the afternoon when he rode for an hour or two; then he dined, read again, smoked again, and went to bed. In September and October he shot, and twice in the year, as has been before stated, went away to seek a little excitement elsewhere. He seemed to be quite contented with his lot, and was never heard to speak an angry word to any one. Nobody cared for him much; but then he troubled himself with no one's affairs. He never went to church, and had not eaten or drank in any house but his own since he had come to Belton.

"Oh, Clara, you naughty girl," said Mrs. Askerton, "why didn't you come yesterday? I was expecting you all day."

"I was busy. Really we've grown to be quite industrious people since my cousin came."

"They tell me he's taking the land into his own hands," said the Colonel.

"Yes, indeed; and he is going to build sheds, and buy cattle; and I don't know what he doesn't mean to do; so that we shall be alive again."

"I hope he won't want my shooting."

"He has shooting of his own in Norfolk," said Clara.

"Then he'll hardly care to come here for that purpose. When I heard of his proceedings I began to be afraid."

"I don't think he would do anything to annoy you for the world," said Clara enthusiastically. "He's the most unselfish person I ever met."

"He'd have a perfect right to take the shooting if he liked it,—that is always supposing that he and your father agreed about it."

"They agree about everything now. He has altogether disarmed papa's prejudices, and it seems to be recognized that he is to have his own way about the place. But I don't think he'll interfere about the shooting."

"He won't, my dear, if you ask him not," said Mrs. Askerton.

"I'll ask him in a moment if Colonel Askerton wishes it."

"Oh dear no," said he. "It would be teaching the oster to grease the horse's teeth. Perhaps he hasn't thought of it."

"He thinks of everything," said Clara.

"I wonder whether he's thinking of"—  
So far Mrs. Askerton spoke, and then she paused. Colonel Askerton looked up at Clara with an ill-natured smile, and Clara

felt that she blushed. Was it not cruel that she could not say a word in favour of a friend and a cousin,—a cousin who had promised to be a brother to her, without being treated with such words and such looks as these? But she was determined not to be put down. "I'm quite sure of this," she said, "that my cousin would do nothing unfair or ungentlemanlike."

"There would be nothing unfair or ungentlemanlike in it. I shouldn't take it amiss at all;—but I should simply take up my bed and walk. Pray tell him that I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing him before he goes. I did call yesterday, but he was out."

"He'll be here soon. He's to come here for me." But Colonel Askerton's horse was brought to the door, and he could not therefore wait to make Mr. Belton's acquaintance on that occasion.

"What a Phoenix this cousin of yours is," said Mrs. Askerton, as soon as her husband was gone.

"He is a splendid fellow;—he is indeed. There's so much life about him! He's always doing something. He says that doing good will always pay in the long run. Isn't that a fine doctrine?"

"Quite a practical Phoenix!"

"It has done papa so much good! At this moment he's out somewhere, thinking of what is going on, instead of moping in the house. He couldn't bear the idea of Will's coming, and now he is already beginning to complain because he's going away."

"Will, indeed!"

"And why not Will? He's my cousin."

"Yes;—ten times removed. But so much the better if he's to be anything more than a cousin."

"He is to be nothing more, Mrs. Askerton."

"You're quite sure of that?"

"I am quite sure of it. And I cannot understand why there should be such a suspicion because he and I are thrown closely together, and are fond of each other. Whether he is a sixth, eighth, or tenth cousin makes no difference. He is the nearest I have on that side; and since my poor brother's death he is papa's heir. It is so natural that he should be my friend;—and such a comfort that he should be such a friend as he is! I own it seems cruel to me that under such circumstances there should be any suspicion."

"Suspicion, my dear;—suspicion of what?"

"Not that I care for it. I am prepared

to love him as if he were my brother. I think him one of the finest creatures I ever knew,—perhaps the finest I ever did know. His energy and good-nature together are just the qualities to make the best kind of man. I am proud of him as my friend and my cousin, and now you may suspect what you please.”

“But, my dear, why should not he fall in love with you? It would be the most proper, and also the most convenient thing in the world.”

“I hate talking of falling in love;—as though a woman has nothing else to think of whenever she sees a man.”

“A woman has nothing else to think of.”

“I have,—a great deal else. And so has he.”

“It’s quite out of the question on his part, then?”

“Quite out of the question. I’m sure he likes me. I can see it in his face, and hear it in his voice, and am so happy that it is so. But it isn’t in the way that you mean. Heaven knows that I may want a friend some of these days, and I feel that I may trust to him. His feelings to me will be always those of a brother.”

“Perhaps so. I have seen that fraternal love before under similar circumstances and it has always ended in the same way.”

“I hope it won’t end in any way between us.”

“But the joke is that this suspicion, as you call it,—which makes you so indignant,—is simply a suggestion that a thing should happen which, of all things in the world, would be the best for both of you.”

“But the thing won’t happen, and therefore let there be an end of it. I hate the twaddle talk of love, whether it’s about myself or about any one else. It makes me feel ashamed of my sex, when I find that I cannot talk of myself to another woman without being supposed to be either in love, or thinking of love,—either looking for it or avoiding it. When it comes, if it comes prosperously, it’s a very good thing. But I for one can do without it, and I feel myself injured when such a state of things is presumed to be impossible.”

“It is worth any one’s while to irritate you, because your indignation is so beautiful.”

“It is not beautiful to me; for I always feel ashamed afterwards of my own energy. And now, if you please, we won’t say anything more about Mr. Will Belton.”

“May I not talk about him, even as the enterprising cousin?”

“Certainly; and in any other light you

please. Do you know he seemed to think that he had known you ever so many years ago. Clara, as she said this, did not look direct at her friend’s face; but still she could perceive that Mrs. Askerton was disconcerted. There came a shade of paleness over her face, and a look of trouble on her brow, and for a moment or two she made no reply.

“Did he?” she then said. “And when was that?”

“I suppose it was in London. But, after all, I believe it was not you, but somebody whom he remembers to have been like you. He says that the lady was a Miss Vigo.” As she pronounced the name, Clara turned her face away, feeling instinctively that it would be kind to do so.

“Miss Vigo!” said Mrs. Askerton at once; and there was that in the tone of her voice which made Clara feel that all was not right with her. “I remember that there were Miss Vigo’s; two of them, I think. I didn’t know that they were like me especially.”

“And he says that the one he remembers married a Mr. Berdmore.”

“Married a Mr. Berdmore!” The tone of voice was still the same, and there was an evident struggle as though the woman was making a vehement effort to speak in her natural voice. Then Clara looked at her, feeling that if she abstained from doing so, the very fact of her so abstaining would be remarkable. There was the look of pain on Mrs. Askerton’s brow, and her cheeks were still pale; but she smiled as she went on speaking. “I’m sure I’m flattered, for I remember that they were both considered beauties. Did he know anything more of her?”

“No; nothing more.”

“There must have been some casual likeness I suppose. Mrs. Askerton was a clever woman, and had by this time almost recovered her self-possession. Then there came a ring at the front door, and in another minute Mr. Belton was in the room. Mrs. Askerton felt that it was imperative on her to make some allusion to the conversation which had just taken place, and dashed at the subject at once. “Clara tells me that I am exactly like some old friend of yours, Mr. Belton.”

Then he looked at her closely as he answered her. “I have no right to say that she was my friend, Mrs. Askerton,” he said; “indeed there was hardly what might be called an acquaintance between us; but you certainly are extremely like a certain Miss Vigo that I remember.”



"I often wonder that one person isn't more often found to be like another," said Mrs. Askerton.

"People often are like," said he; "but not like in such a way as to give rise to mistakes as to identity. Now, I should have stopped you in the street and called you Mrs. Berdmore."

"Didn't I once see or hear the name of Berdmore in this house?" asked Clara.

Then that look of pain returned. Mrs. Askerton had succeeded in recovering the usual tone of her countenance; but now she was once more disturbed. "I think I know the name," said she.

"I fancy that I have seen it in this house," said Clara.

"You may more likely have heard it, my dear. My memory is very poor, but if I remember rightly, Colonel Askerton did know a Captain Berdmore, — a long while ago, before he was married; and you may probably have heard him mention the name." This did not quite satisfy Clara, but she said nothing more about it then. If there was a mystery which Mrs. Askerton did not wish to have explored, why should she explore it?

Soon after this Clara got up to go, and Mrs. Askerton, making another attempt to be cheerful, was almost successful. "So you're going back into Norfolk on Saturday, Clara tells me. You are making a very short visit now that you're come among us."

"It is a long time for me to be away from home. Farmers can hardly ever dare to leave their work. But in spite of my farm, I am talking of coming here again about Christmas."

"But you are going to have a farming establishment here too?"

"That will be nothing. Clara will look after that for me; will you not?" Then they went, and Belton had to consider how he would begin the work before him. He had some idea that too much precipitancy might do him an injury, but he hardly knew how to commence without coming to the point at once. When they were out together in the park, he went back at first to the subject of Mrs. Askerton.

"I would almost have sworn they were one and the same woman," he said.

"But you see that they are not."

"It's not only the likeness, but the voice. It so chanced that I once saw that Miss Vigo in some trouble. I happened to meet her in company with a man who was, — who was tipsy in fact, and I had to relieve her."

"Dear me, — how disagreeable!"

"It's a long time ago, and there can't be any harm in mentioning it now. It was the man she was going to marry, and whom she did marry."

"What; — the Mr. Berdmore?"

"Yes; he was often in that way. And there was a look about Mrs. Askerton just now so like the look of that Miss Vigo then, that I cannot get rid of the idea."

"They can't be the same, as she was certainly a Miss Oliphant. And you hear, too, what she says."

"Yes; — I heard what she said. You have known her long?"

"These two years."

"And intimately?"

"Very intimately. She is our only neighbour; and her being here has certainly been a great comfort to me. It is sad not having some woman near one that one can speak to; — and then, I really do like her very much."

"No doubt it's all right."

"Yes; it's all right," said Clara. After that there was nothing more said about Mrs. Askerton, and Belton began his work. They had gone from the cottage, across the park, away from the house, up to a high rock which stood boldly out of the ground, from whence could be seen the sea on one side, and on the other a far tract of country almost away to the moors. And when they reached this spot they seated themselves. "There," said Clara, "I consider this to be the prettiest spot in England."

"I haven't seen all England," said Belton.

"Don't be so matter-of-fact, Will. I say it's the prettiest in England, and you can't contradict me."

"And I say you're the prettiest girl in England, and you can't contradict me."

This annoyed Clara, and almost made her feel that her paragon of a cousin was not quite so perfect as she had represented him to be. "I see," she said, "that if I talk nonsense I'm to be punished."

"Is it a punishment to you to know that I think you very handsome?" he said, turning round and looking full into her face.

"It is disagreeable to me, — very, to have any such subject talked about at all. What would you think if I began to pay you foolish personal compliments?"

"What I say isn't foolish; and there's a great difference. Clara, I love you better than all the world put together."

She now looked at him; but still she did not believe it. It could not be that after all her boastings she could have made so gross

blunder. "I hope you do love me," she said; "indeed, you are bound to do so, for you promised that you would be my brother."

"But that will not satisfy me now, Clara. Clara, I want to be your husband."

"Will!" she exclaimed.

"Now you know it all; and if I have been too sudden, I must beg your pardon."

"Oh, Will, forget that you have said this. Do not go on until everything must be over between us."

"Why should anything be over between us? Why should it be wrong in me to love you?"

"What will papa say?"

"Mr. Amedroz knows all about it already, and has given me his consent. I asked him directly I had made up my mind, and he told me that I might go to you."

"You've asked papa? Oh dear, oh dear, what am I to do?"

"Am I so odious to you then?" As he said this he got up from his seat and stood before her. He was a tall, well-built, handsome man, and he could assume a look and mien that were almost noble when he was moved as he was moved now.

"Odious! Do you not know that I have loved you as my cousin,—that I have already learned to trust you as though you were really my brother? But this breaks it all."

"You cannot love me then as my wife?"

"No." She pronounced the monosyllable alone, and then he walked away from her as though that one little word settled the question for him now and for ever. He walked away from her, perhaps a distance of two hundred yards, as though the interview was over, and he were leaving her. She, as she saw him go, wished that he would return that she might say some word of comfort to him. Not that she could have said the only word that would have comforted him. At the first blush of the thing, at the first sound of the address which he had made to her, she had been angry with him. He had disappointed her, and she was indignant. But her anger had already melted, and turned itself to ruth. She could not but love him better, in that he had loved her so well; but yet she could not love him with the love which he desired.

But he did not leave her. When he had gone from her down the hill the distance that has been named, he turned back, and came up to her slowly. He had a trick of standing and walking with his thumbs fixed into the armholes of his waistcoat, while his large hands rested on his breast. He would al-

ways assume this attitude when he was assured that he was right in his views, and was eager to carry some point at issue. Clara already understood that this attitude signified his intention to be autocratic. He now came close up to her, and again stood over her before he spoke. "My dear," he said, "I have been rough and hasty in what I have said to you, and I have to ask you to pardon my want of manners."

"No, no, no," she exclaimed.

"But in a matter of so much interest to us both you will not let an awkward manner prejudice me."

"It is not that; indeed, it is not."

"Listen to me, dearest. It is true that I promised to be your brother, and I will not break my word unless I break it by your own sanction. I did promise to be your brother, but I did not know then how fondly I should come to love you. Your father, when I told him of this, bade me not to be hasty; but I am hasty, and I haven't known how to wait. Tell me that I may come at Christmas for my answer, and I will not say a word to trouble you till then. I will be your brother, at any rate till Christmas."

"Be my brother always."

A black cloud crossed his brow as this request reached his ears. She was looking anxiously into his face, watching every turn in the expression of his countenance. "Will you not let it wait till Christmas?" he asked.

She thought it would be cruel to refuse this request, and yet she knew that no such waiting could be of service to him. He had been awkward in his love-making, and was aware of it. He should have contrived this period of waiting for himself; giving her no option but to wait and think of it. He should have made no proposal, but have left her certain that such proposal was coming. In such case she must have waited,—and if good could have come to him from that, he might have received it. But, as the question was now presented to her, it was impossible that she should consent to wait. To have given such consent would have been tantamount to receiving him as her lover. She was therefore forced to be cruel.

"It will be of no avail to postpone my answer, when I know what it must be. Why should there be suspense?"

"You mean that it is impossible that you should love me?"

"Not in that way, Will."

"And why not?" Then there was a pause. "But I am a fool to ask such a question as that, and I should be worse than

a fool were I to press it. It must then be considered as settled."

She got up and clung to his arm. "Oh, Will, do not look at me like that!"

"It must then be considered as settled?" he repeated.

"Yes, Will, yes. Pray consider it as settled." He then sat down on the rock again, and she came and sat by him, — near to him, but not close as she had been before. She turned her eyes upon him, gazing on him, but did not speak to him; and he sat also without speaking for a while, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. "I suppose we may go back to the house?" he said at last.

"Give me your hand, Will, and tell me that you will still love me, — as your sister."

He gave her his hand. "If you ever want a brother's care, you shall have it from me," he said.

"But not a brother's love."

"No. How can the two go together. I shan't cease to love you, because my love is vain. Instead of making me happy it will make me wretched. That will be the only difference."

"I would give my life to make you happy, if that were possible."

"You will not give me your life in the way that I would have it. After that they walked in silence back to the house, and when he had opened the front door for her, he parted from her and stood alone under the porch, thinking of his misfortune.

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### SAFE AGAINST LOVE-MAKING ONCE AGAIN.

FOR a considerable time Belton stood under the porch of the house thinking of what had happened to him, and endeavouring to steady himself under the blow which he had received. I do not know that he had been sanguine of success. Probably he had made to himself no assurance on the subject. But he was a man to whom failure, of itself, was intolerable. In any other event of life he would have told himself that he would not fail, — that he would persevere and conquer. He could imagine no other position as to which he could at once have been assured of failure, in any project on which he had set his heart. But as to this project it was so. He had been told that she could not love him, — that she never could love him; — and he had believed her. He made his attempt and had failed; and as he thought of this, standing under the porch, he became convinced that life for him was altogether

changed, and that he who had been so happy must now be a wretched man.

He was still standing there when Mr. Amedroz came down into the hall, dressed for dinner, and saw his figure through the open doors. "Will," he said, coming up to him, "it only wants five minutes to dinner." Belton started and shook himself, as though he were shaking off a lethargy, and declared that he was quite ready. Then he remembered that he would be expected to dress, and rushed up stairs, three steps at a time, to his own room. When he came down, Clara and her father were already in the dining-room, and he joined them there.

Mr. Amedroz, though he was not very quick in reading facts from the manners of those with whom he lived, had felt assured that things had gone wrong between Belton and his daughter. He had not yet had a minute in which to speak to Clara, but he was certain that it was so. Indeed, it was impossible not to read terrible disappointment and deep grief in the young man's manner. He made no attempt to conceal it, though he did not speak of it. Through the whole evening, though he was alone for a while with the squire, and alone also for a time with Clara, he never mentioned or alluded to the subject of his rejection. But he bore himself as though he knew and they knew, as though all the world knew, that he had been rejected. And yet he did not remain silent. He talked of his property and of his plans, and explained how things were to be done in his absence. Once only was there something like an allusion made to his sorrow. "But you will be here at Christmas?" said Mr. Amedroz, in answer to something which Belton had said as to work to be done in his absence. "I do not know how that may be now," said Belton. And then they had all been silent.

It was a terrible evening to Clara. She endeavoured to talk, but found it to be impossible. All the brightness of the last few days had disappeared, and the world seemed to her to be more sad and solemn than ever. She had no idea when she was refusing him that he would take it to heart as he had done. The question had come before her for decision so suddenly, that she had not, in fact, had time to think of this, as she was making her answer. All she had done was to feel that she could not be to him what he wished her to be. And even as yet she had hardly asked herself why she must be so steadfast in her refusal. But she had refused him steadfastly, and she did not for a moment think of reducing the earnestness of her resolution. It seemed to be manifest to

her from his present manner, that he would never ask the question again; but she was sure, let it be asked ever so often, that it could not be answered in any other way.

Mr. Amedroz, not knowing why it was so, became cross and querulous and scolded his daughter. To Belton, also, he was captious, making little difficulties, and answering him with petulance. This the rejected lover took with most extreme patience, as though such a trifling annoyance had no effect in adding anything to his misery. He still held his purpose of going on the Saturday, and was still intent on work which was to be done before he went; but it seemed that he was satisfied to do everything now as a duty, and that the enjoyment of the thing, which had heretofore been so conspicuous, was over.

At last they separated, and Clara, as was her wont, went up to her father's room. "Papa," she said, "what is all this about Mr. Belton?"

"All what, my dear? what do you mean?"

"He has asked me to be, — to be his wife; and has told me that he came with your consent."

"And why shouldn't he have my consent? What is there amiss with him? Why shouldn't you marry him if he likes you? You seemed, I thought, to be very fond of him."

This surprised Clara more than anything. She could hardly have told herself why, but she would have thought that such a proposition from her cousin would have made her father angry, — unreasonably angry; — angry with him for presuming to have such an idea; but now it seemed that he was going to be angry with her for not accepting her cousin out of hand.

"Yes, papa; I am fond of him; but not like that. I did not expect that he would think of me in that way."

"But why shouldn't he think of you? It would be a very good marriage for you as far as money is concerned."

"You would not have me marry any one for that reason; — would you, papa?"

"But you seemed to like him. Well; of course I can't make you like him. I meant to do for the best; and when he came to me as he did, I thought he was behaving very handsomely, and very much like a gentleman."

"I am sure he would do that."

"And if I could have thought that this place would be your home when I am gone, it would have made me very happy; — very happy."

She now came and stood close to him and took his hand. "I hope, papa, you do not make yourself uneasy about me. I shall do very well. I'm sure you can't want me to go away and leave you."

"How will you do very well? I'm sure I don't know. And if your aunt Winterfield means to provide for you, it would only be kind in her to let me know it, so that I might not have the anxiety always on my mind."

"Clara knew well enough what was to be the disposition of her aunt's property, but she could not tell her father of that now. She almost felt that it was her duty to do so, but she could not bring herself to do it. She could only beg him not to be anxious on her behalf, making vague assurances that she would do very well. "And you are determined not to change your mind about Will?" he said at last.

"I shall not change my mind about that, papa, certainly," she answered. Then he turned away from her, and she saw that he was displeased.

When alone, she was forced to ask herself why it was that she was so certain. Alas! there could in truth be no doubt on that subject in her own mind. When she sat down resolved to give herself an answer, there was no doubt. She could not love her cousin, Will Belton, because her heart belonged to Captain Aylmer.

But she knew that she had received nothing in exchange for her heart. He had been kind to her on that journey to Taunton, when the agony arising from her brother's death had almost crushed her. He had often been kind to her on days before that, — so kind, so soft in his manners, approaching so nearly to the little tendernesses of incipient love-making, that the idea of regarding him as her lover had of necessity forced itself upon her. But in nothing had he gone beyond those tendernesses, which need not imperatively be made to mean anything, though they do often mean so much. It was now two years since she had first thought that Captain Aylmer was the most perfect gentleman she knew, and nearly two years since Mrs. Winterfield had expressed to her a hope that Captain Aylmer might become her husband. She had replied that such a thing was impossible, — as any girl would have replied; and had in consequence treated Captain Aylmer with all the coolness which she had been able to assume whenever she was in company with him in her aunt's presence. Nor was it natural to her to be specially gracious to a man under such trying circumstances even when no



Mrs. Winterfield was there to behold. And so things had gone on. Captain Aylmer had now and again made himself very pleasant to her,—at certain trying periods of joy or trouble, almost more than pleasant. But nothing had come of it, and Clara had told herself that Captain Aylmer had no special feeling in her favour. She had told herself this, ever since that journey together from Perivale to Taunton; but never till now had she also confessed to herself what was her own case.

She made a comparison between the two men. Her cousin Will was, she thought, the more generous, the more energetic,—perhaps by nature the man of the higher gifts. In person he was undoubtedly the superior. He was full of noble qualities;—forgetful of self, industrious, full of resources, a very man of men, able to command, eager in doing work for others' good and his own,—a man altogether uncontaminated by the coldness and selfishness of the outer world. But he was rough, awkward, but indifferently educated, and with few of those tastes which to Clara Amedroz were delightful. He could not read poetry to her, he could not tell her of what the world of literature was doing now or of what it had done in times past. He knew nothing of the inner world of worlds which governs the world. She doubted whether he could have told her who composed the existing cabinet, or have given her the name of a single bishop beyond the see in which his own parish was situated. But Captain Aylmer knew everybody, and had read everything, and understood, as though by instinct, all the movements of the world in which he lived.

But what mattered any such comparison? Even though she should be able to prove to herself beyond the shadow of a doubt that her cousin Will was of the two the fitter to be loved,—the one more worthy of her heart,—no such proof could alter her position. Love does not go by worth. She did not love her cousin as she must love any man to whom she could give her hand,—and alas! she did love that other man.

On this night I doubt whether Belton did slumber with that solidity of repose which was usual to him. At any rate, before he came down in the morning he had found time for sufficient thought, and had brought himself to a resolution. He would not give up the battle as lost. To his thinking there was something weak and almost mean in abandoning any project which he had set before himself. He had been awkward, and he exaggerated to himself his

own awkwardness. He had been hasty, and had gone about his task with inconsiderate precipitancy. It might be that he had thus destroyed all his chance of success. But, as he said to himself, "he would never say die, as long as there was a puff of breath left to him. He would not mope, and hang down his head, and wear the willow. Such a state of things would ill suit either the roughness or the readiness of his life. No! He would bear like a man the disappointment which had on this occasion befallen him, and would return at Christmas, and once more try his fortune.

At breakfast, therefore, the cloud had passed from his brow. When he came in, he found Clara alone in the room, and he simply shook hands with her after his ordinary fashion. He said nothing of yesterday, and almost succeeded in looking as though yesterday had been in no wise memorable. She was not so much at her ease, but she also received some comfort from his demeanour. Mr. Amedroz came down almost immediately, and Belton soon took an opportunity of saying that he would be back at Christmas if Mr. Amedroz would receive him.

"Certainly," said the squire. "I thought it had been all settled."

"So it was;—till I said a word yesterday which foolishly seemed to unsettle it. But I have thought it over again, and I find that I can manage it."

"We shall be so glad to have you!" said Clara.

"And I shall be equally glad to come. They are already at work, sir, about the sheds."

"Yes; I saw the carts full of bricks go by," said the squire, querulously. "I didn't know there was to be any brickwork. You said you would have it made of deal slabs with oak posts."

"You must have a foundation, sir. I propose to carry the brickwork a foot and a half above the ground."

"I suppose you know best. Only that kind of thing is so very ugly."

"If you find it to be ugly after it is done, it shall be pulled down again."

"No;—it can never come down again."

"It can;—and it shall, if you don't like it. I never think anything of changes like that."

"I think they'll be very pretty!" said Clara.

"I dare say," said the squire; "but at any rate it won't make much difference to me. I shan't be here long to see them."

This was rather melancholy; but Belton

bore up even against this, speaking cheery words, and expressing bright hopes,—so that it seemed, both to Clara and to her father, that he had in a great measure overcome the disappointment of the preceding day. It was probable that he was a man not prone to be deeply sensitive in such matters for any long period. The period now had certainly not been long, and yet Will Belton was alive again.

Immediately after breakfast there occurred a little incident which was not without its effect upon them all. There came up on the drive, immediately before the front door, under the custody of a boy, a cow. It was an Alderney cow, and any man or woman at all understanding in cows would at once have perceived that this cow was perfect in her kind. Her eyes were mild, and soft, and bright. Her legs were like the legs of a deer; and in her whole gait and demeanour she almost gave the lie to her own name, asserting herself to have sprung from some more noble origin among the woods than may be supposed to be the origin of the ordinary domestic cow,—a useful animal, but heavy in its appearance, and seen with more pleasure at some little distance than at close quarters. But this cow was graceful in its movements, and almost tempted one to regard her as the far-off descendant of the elk or the antelope.

"What's that?" said Mr. Amedroz, who, having no cows of his own, was not pleased to see one brought up in that way before his hall door. "There's somebody's cow come here."

Clara understood it in a moment; but she was pained, and said nothing. Had the cow come without any such scene as that of yesterday, she would have welcomed the animal with all cordiality, and would have sworn to her cousin that the cow should be cherished for his sake. But after what had passed it was different. How was she to take any present from him now?

But Belton faced the difficulty without any bashfulness or apparent regret. "I told you I would give you a cow," said he; "and here she is."

"What can she want with a cow?" said Mr. Amedroz.

"I am sure she wants one very much. At any rate she won't refuse the present from me; will you, Clara?"

What could she say? "Not if papa will allow me to keep it."

"But we've no place to put it," said the squire. "We haven't got grass for it."

"There's plenty of grass," said Belton. "Come, Mr. Amedroz; I've made a point

of getting this little creature for Clara, and you musn't stand in the way of my gratification." Of course he was successful, and of course Clara thanked him with tears in her eyes.

The next two days passed by without anything special to mark them, and then the cousin was to go. During the period of his visit he did not see Colonel Askerton, nor did he again see Mrs. Askerton. He went to the cottage once, with the special object of returning the Colonel's call; but the master was out, and he was not specially invited in to see the mistress. He said nothing more to Clara about her friends, but he thought of the matter more than once, as he was going about the place, and became aware that he would like to ascertain whether there was a mystery, and if so, what was its nature. He knew that he did not like Mrs. Askerton, and he felt also that Mrs. Askerton did not like him. This was, as he thought, unfortunate; for might it not be the case that in the one matter which was to him of so much importance, Mrs. Askerton might have considerable influence over Clara.

During these days nothing special was said between him and Clara. The last evening passed over without anything to brighten it, or to make it memorable. Mr. Amedroz, in his passive, but gently querulous way, was sorry that Belton was going to leave him, as his cousin had been the creation of some new excitement for him; but he said nothing on the subject; and when the time for going to bed had come, he bade his guest farewell with some languid allusion to the pleasure which he would have in seeing him again at Christmas. Belton was to start very early in the morning,—before six; and of course he was prepared to take leave also of Clara. But she told him very gently, so gently that her father did not hear it, that she would be up to give him a cup of coffee before he went.

"Oh, no," he said.

"But I shall. I won't have you go without seeing you out of the door."

And on the following morning she was up before him. She hardly understood, herself, why she was doing this. She knew that it should be her object to avoid any further special conversation on that subject which they had discussed up among the rocks. She knew that she could give him no comfort, and that he could give none to her. It would seem that he was willing to let the remembrance of the scene pass away, so that it should be as though it had never been; and surely it was not for her to disturb so

salutary an arrangement! But yet she was up to bid him God speed as he went. She could not bear,—so she excused the matter to herself,—she could not bear to think that he should regard her as ungrateful. She knew all that he had done for them. She had perceived that the taking of the land, the building of the sheds, the life which he had contrived in so short a time to throw into the old place, had all come from a desire on his part to do good to those in whose way he stood by family arrangements made almost before his birth; and she longed to say to him one word of thanks. And had he not told her,—once in the heat of his disappointment; for then at that moment, as Clara said to herself, she supposed that he must have been in some measure disappointed,—had he not even then told her that when she wanted a brother's care, a brother's care should be given to her by him? Was she not therefore bound to do for him what she would do for a brother?

She, with her own hands, brought the coffee into the little breakfast parlour, and handed the cup into his hands. The gig, which had come over night from Taunton, was not yet at the door, and there was a minute or two during which they must speak to each other. Who has not seen some such girl when she has come down early, without the full completeness of her morning toilet, and yet nicer, fresher, prettier to the eye of him who is so favored, than she has ever been in more formal attire? And what man who has been so favoured has not loved her who has so favoured him, even though he may not previously have been enamoured as deeply as poor Will Belton?

"This is so good of you," he said.

"I wish I knew how to be good to you," she answered,—not meaning to trench upon dangerous ground, but feeling, as the words came from her, that she had done so. "You have been so good to us, so very good to papa, that we owe you everything. I am so grateful to you for saying that you will come back at Christmas."

He had resolved that he would refrain from further love-making till the winter; but he found it very hard to refrain when so addressed. To take her in his arms, and kiss her twenty times, and swear that he would never let her go,—to claim her at once savagely as his own, that was the line of conduct to which temptation prompted him. How could she look at him so sweetly, how could she stand before him, ministering to him, with all her pretty maidenly charms brought so close to him, without intending that he should love her? But he did refrain.

"Blood is thicker than water," said he. "That's the real reason why I first came."

"I understand that quite, and it is that feeling that makes you so good. But I'm afraid you are spending a great deal of money here,—and all for our sakes."

"Not at all. I shall get my money back again. And if I didn't, what then? I've plenty of money. It is not money that I want."

She could not ask him what it was that he did want, and she was obliged therefore to begin again. "Papa will look forward so to the winter now."

"And so shall I."

"But you must come for longer then;—you won't go away at the end of a week? Say that you won't."

"I'll see about it. I can't tell quite yet. You'll write me a line to say when the shed is finished, won't you?"

"That I will, and I'll tell you how Bessey goes on." Bessey was the cow. "I will be so very fond of her. She'll come to me for apples already."

Belton thought that he would go to her, wherever she might be, even if he were to get no apples. "It's all cupboard love with them," he said. "I'll tell you what I'll do;—when I come, I'll bring you a dog that will follow you without thinking of apples." Then the gig was heard on the gravel before the door, and Belton was forced to go. For a moment he reflected whether, as her cousin, it was not his duty to kiss her. It was a matter as to which he had doubt,—as is the case with many male cousins; but ultimately he resolved that if he kissed her at all, he would not kiss her in that light, and so he again refrained. "Good-bye," he said, putting out his great hand to her.

"Good-bye, Will, and God bless you." I almost think he might have kissed her, asking himself no questions as to the light in which it was done.

As he turned from her he saw the tears in her eyes, and, as he sat in the gig thinking of them, other tears came into his own. By heaven, he would have her yet! He was a man who had not read much of romance. To him all the imagined mysteries of passion had not been made common by the perusal of legions of love stories;—but still he knew enough of the game to be aware that women had been won in spite, as it were, of their own teeth. He knew that he could not now run away with her, taking her off by force; but still he might conquer her will by his own. As he remembered the tears in her eyes, and the tone of her voice, and the pressure of her hand, and

the gratitude that had become tender in its expression, he could not but think that he would be wise to love her still. Wise or foolish, he did love her still; and it should not be owing to fault of his if she did not become his wife. As he drove along he saw little of the Quantock hills, little of the rich Somersetshire pastures, little of the early beauty of the August morning. He saw nothing but her eyes, moistened with bright tears, and before he reached Taunton he had rebuked himself with many revilings in that he had parted from her and had not kissed her.

Clara stood at the door watching the gig till it was out of sight,—watching it as well as her tears would allow. What a grand cousin he was! Had it not been a pity,—a thousand pities,—that that grievous episode should have come to mar the brotherly love, the sisterly confidence, which might otherwise have been so perfect between them? But perhaps it might all be well yet. Clara knew, or thought that she knew, that men and women differed in their appreciation of love. She, having once loved, could not change. Of that she was sure. Her love might be fortunate or unfortunate.

It might be returned, or it might simply be her own, to destroy all hope of happiness for her on earth. But whether it were this or that, whether productive of good or evil, the love itself could not be changed. But with men she thought it might be different. Her cousin, doubtless, had been sincere in the full sincerity of his heart when he made his offer. And had she accepted it,—had she been able to accept it,—she believed that he would have loved her truly and constantly. Such was his nature. But she also believed that love with him, unrequited love, would have no enduring effect, and that he had already resolved, with equal courage and wisdom, to tread this short-lived passion out beneath his feet. One night had sufficed to him for that treading out. As she thought of this the tears ran plentifully down her cheek; and going again to her room she remained there crying till it was time for her to wipe away the marks of her weeping, that she might go to her father.

But she was very glad that Will bore it so well;—very glad! Her cousin was safe against love-making once again.

THE SWEDES SEAL-HUNTING. — In many places off these coasts the inhabitants in February and March fit out a small fleet of boats, with iron-shod keels, each provisioned for two or three months for eight men. These boats sail out to sea among the ice islands in search of the gray seal. Three or four boats generally follow each other in case of need in this adventurous chase. When they come to an iceberg, they fasten the boat on its lower side, and then try if they can find any seals on it. Such an island of drift ice is often three English miles long, and stands up twenty to twenty-five feet above the water's edge, and consists of larger and smaller masses of ice drifted together, forming a surface full of holes and cracks. On such an island the gray seal often assemble in large flocks. As soon as the

hunters perceive them, they rush up, and with their clubs stun as many as they can before they creep down into the sea through the holes in the ice. They let the young ones, which are now small, lie, as they will not take to the water by themselves. But if there are many holes in the ice, the shooter must creep on his belly within shot and kill the seal with his gun. If it happens that a great many are assembled, and are fighting for places, which is usually the case, there is such a riot and confusion that they take little heed of the shot; and the shooter, who is dressed in seal skin, and moreover imitates beautifully the wriggling motions of the seal and their roaring cry, can often fire shot after shot, and secure a rich booty. — *The Old Bushranger's "Ten Years in Sweden."*



From the *Fraser's Magazine*.

BRODIE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY. \*

THERE are two ways in which a well-spent life is of service to others. First, by its immediate example to those among whom it is passed, no less than by the actual benefits that may have been conferred during its continuance; secondly, when it is made to furnish a record which may be useful for the instruction and admonition of succeeding generations. Of all lives of persons who have in any degree emerged from the common herd, there must probably be something worth recording; just as it has been said that there is no person from whose conversation something may not be learned. Of all forms of biography that is the most interesting in which the writer tells his own story, or leaves ample materials of his own, in the shape of journals and letters, from which it may be told by another.

The place occupied in his profession and in the scientific world by the late Sir Benjamin Brodie was such as to raise expectation when it was announced that he had left behind him an account of his own life. Yet, it was, perhaps, generally of a different kind of work from that which we actually have.

More of the scientific experience gained in a long course of the most successful practice may have been looked for; and, perhaps, more of the sort of anecdote, so much of which may be gathered, and fairly reported by the eminent professional man whose avocations gave him so wide and peculiar an insight into so many varieties of life and character. Instead of this, however, we have something honester and better, and of far more more general worth. We have a simple and modest, yet sufficiently full narrative of a fortunate professional career, in which, as in the life which it exhibits, there is little or no turning aside from the main object in view. It teaches us how, without any very extraordinary genius, or any very unusual opportunities, certain qualities and certain habits may be relied upon to insure success; and it is in this way a monument of excellence and industry of no small interest and value.

Brodie started in life with no disadvantage of social position for his subsequent career, yet without any circumstance of particular felicity in this respect. He is able to trace his pedigree to his paternal grandfather, but no farther backwards. This person is described as having come from Scotland to London, a humble adventurer, and

probably involved in some of the political troubles of the time. But he married the daughter of a physician, and seems to have been an army-clothier, and to have held some post in the Stamp Office. Dr. Denman, the father of the first Lord Denman, married one of his daughters. Brodie's father was a foundation scholar at the Charter House; afterwards of Worcester College, Oxford, and a clergyman. He enjoyed the friendship of the first Lord Holland; but beyond procuring for him the presentation to the Rectory of Winterslow, which is described as what would be commonly called a very good living, his connection with the Holland family does not appear to have exercised any further influence on his fortunes. Indeed, the politics implied by his relations with them must have been a perpetual disadvantage. His son speaks of him as a person of remarkable talents and acquirements—a good Greek and Latin scholar—an attentive parish priest—and an active and energetic magistrate—altogether filling a place of more importance and usefulness in his neighbourhood than might have been expected from his means and station. Brodie was, one of six children, four sons and two daughters, and was born in 1783. The value of his living, and the income derivable from other sources, would seem to have been enough to enable the rector of Winterslow to send his sons to be educated at good schools. But, for whatever reason, they were in fact taught at home under the care of their father; and Brodie enjoyed the great additional advantage of receiving some part of his instruction from a sister, seven years his senior. The process of home education appears to have been carried on in the Wiltshire parsonage with success, and with considerable immediate satisfaction to the persons engaged in it as pupils and teachers. Early habits of industry were inculcated; and, above all, the work was made interesting to the learners—a point in which home education, perhaps, possesses its chief advantage over the great school, in which little individual attention can be afforded to each boy, and little pains taken to humour particular characters and dispositions; but all must, more or less, go through the same round of subjects, and move at the same pace. Brodie reverts with gratitude to this part of his life, and says that he attributes much of his success in life to this home discipline. For a year after his leaving Eton, the late Lord Denman was a fellow-pupil with his Brodie cousins at their father's rectory. Of him, Brodie says that 'he was a thoroughly good boy,

\* *Autobiography of the late Sir Benjamin C. Brodie*. London: Longman and Co. 1865.

upright and honourable as he has been ever since.' And there were others who brok't the strict domesticity of the family circle. But, as Brodie admits with the frank candour of an honest autobiographer, there was not sufficient intercourse with others of his own age and with the outer world to counteract the two most ordinary defects of a private education. He confesses to a shyness in general society, which it was the work of many years to overcome; and also to the want of a due estimate of himself; in some things thinking too well, and in others not well enough, of his own powers and capacity. On the other hand there may be claimed for such an education a better prospect of forming an independent character, and habits of reliance on self for occupation and amusement than is always to be expected from education under ordinary conditions, among great numbers. This same shyness is perhaps one of the greatest minor misfortunes with which a young man can enter life; but it would be a great mistake to suppose that it is always the result of a private education, or that it can, as a matter of course, be avoided by a public one. It really depends much more upon individual disposition than upon any circumstances of an external nature. Certain temperaments may be thoroughly exposed to all the influences and attritions of public school and university life — the social discipline of the army or navy, or to that of what is called 'society' *par excellence*, without losing their original sensitiveness and morbid consciousness of self, and without abating materially from their native indisposition to enter readily into the feelings of others, and to give and take with grace, good humour, and alacrity such slight buffetings as are of perpetual occurrence in playing the less serious parts of the game of life. On great occasions shyness disappears. There may be intense suffering in anticipation — but the young lawyer or orator once engaged in his speech, forgets his personal miseries while actually speaking — although the previous sense of discomfort may never be got over with the largest amount of experience. Cavendish, the distinguished chemist, was so shy to the end of his life, that he would utter a little cry, like that of an animal in distress, when addressed by a stranger; and any of his servants who allowed themselves to be met by him in the passages or on the staircases of his house, were punished with instant dismissal. Such a disposition may be fostered by indulgence in retirement, but cannot be altogether reformed by any amount of social intercourse.

The other objection to an exclusively private system of education is one inherently, and almost inevitably, belonging to it. Nothing but constant opportunities of comparison with the progress, abilities, and industry of others can secure the formation of a sound estimate of self. Without this there must be gross self-exaggeration, or equally ill-founded self-depreciation; and it would be difficult to say which is likely to be more mischievous, or more productive of discomfort in after life.

In 1798, when there was an alarm of French invasion, and volunteer corps were being formed in the country, Brodie and his two brothers raised a company consisting of one hundred and forty men; and by their father's influence received commissions as captain, lieutenant, and ensign: the eldest of them being at the time only nineteen years old. This occupation must have afforded a very useful supplement to the rest of their education, and have supplied some elements towards the formation of character which were wanting in it; and Brodie acknowledges its useful influence accordingly.

This is almost the only occasion in the volume when any allusion is made to public or political events; and it is singular that this should be so in the narrative of a life comprehending the period of the first and second French Revolutions, the great continental war, and all the agitating events and discussions that belonged to the questions of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. It shows how, living in times of great excitement, the successful surgeon stuck to his own work; so that in reviewing his career at its close, he does not find it necessary for any autobiographical purpose to refer to any of these matters as having affected himself. The moral is a good one, and ought not to be lost.

The two years from 1799 to 1801 had probably the largest share in the formation of Brodie's future character. His brothers had left home, and he was thrown more entirely into the society of his father than before, and upon the resources of desultory reading in a library which may be presumed to have been tolerably well furnished. In this way there was a happy admixture of *laissez aller* with discipline, with such advantages as are claimed in a passage from Sir Humphry Davy's *Memoirs*, quoted by Brodie himself in his pleasant volume of *Psychological Inquiries*, in which he says, 'I consider it as fortunate that I was left much to myself as a child, and put on no particular plan of study, and that I enjoyed

much idleness at Mr. Coryton's school. I perhaps owe to these circumstances the little talents I have, and their peculiar application.'

In mathematics Brodie did not rise above geometry and algebra, but acquired the elements of physical science, read a good deal of metaphysics, worked at chemistry, made acquaintance with English poetry, and some French and Italian. He confesses, however, that his poetical taste was not of the purest kind, that he vastly admired Darwin (then probably at the height of his popularity), and did not learn to appreciate Shakspeare until some years afterwards: all which is as might have been expected.

The brothers knew that they would have to make their own way in the world. The eldest betook himself to law, and rose to the top of his profession as a conveyancing counsel. The second went into business, and was at one time member for Salisbury. Benjamin, with Dr. Denman as his uncle by marriage, and Baillie and Croft married to his first cousins, was, by these external circumstances, very naturally attracted to medicine. He disclaims the existence of any original preference for it in his own case, and avows his general want of faith in the special vocations to particular callings, which are sometimes supposed to exist in young men. He says, and the words are of the utmost practical value, 'The persons who succeed best in professions are those who having (perhaps from some accidental circumstance) been led to embark in them, persevere in their course, as a matter of duty, or because they have nothing better to do.' This may not be accepted, perhaps, as the opinion of a man of genius, but it is brimful of common sense, and is founded upon a long and sagacious experience of professional life. It elevates the iron crown of duty above every other emblem of rule, and deserves to be constantly remembered by all those whom it concerns. In another place Brodie disclaims having any special manual aptitude to account for his becoming so excellent an operator and dissector; and says that, on the contrary, he was naturally very clumsy in the use of his hands, and only became at all otherwise by taking great pains.

On coming to London, Brodie attended Abernethy's lectures on anatomy. He speaks of him as all his pupils have done. He seems to have possessed the happy power of communicating the largest amount of instruction with the least fatigue to his hearers. His

example, and the devotional regard with which he inspired Brodie, determined him to belong to the same department of the profession in which Abernethy was distinguished. And after the experience of fifty years, he gives it as his opinion 'that the pursuit of what is called pure surgery, such as in it is large cities, in connexion with a hospital and a medical school, is more replete with interest, and, on the whole, more satisfactory, than any of the other branches into which the *ars medendi* is divided.'

Brodie was, during his first years of London, thrown much into the company of young lawyers. There was his own brother, and Denman, and Merivale, and Stoddart, and Gifford, and others, mostly several years older than himself, to whose society and example he confesses himself to have been much indebted. He was one of the early members of the debating society called 'The Academical,' transplanted from Oxford by Dr. Maton and some of his friends, and then held at a large house in Bell-yard. Among the members were the two Grants, Bowdler, Francis Horner, and Sir Henry Ellis, with whom Brodie was for some time associated as one of the joint secretaries or registrars of the society. Lord Campbell, too, was one of the club, and is mentioned as having read an essay to prove that war had been the great agent in civilizing the world. He was 'an indifferent speaker, but what he said was always to the purpose.'

Dr. Maton was the president, and a most zealous member of 'The Academical,' and desired to confine its debates to the discussion of literary and scientific subjects. But its locality, and the number of young lawyers belonging to it, ruled otherwise; and as might have been expected, the society assumed more of the character of a general debating club, in which capacity it flourished for some years, but ceased to be connected with the life of the student and professor of surgery with which we are now concerned.

Sir Benjamin Brodie has some remarks on the changes in hours and manners which have rendered the attendance at evening meetings more difficult than it used to be, when the habitual dinner-time, at least among the professional classes, was not later than five o'clock. To this also must be added the more multiplied attractions of private society, and the better general facilities now enjoyed of joining in, or listening to, good conversation without going out of the ordinary opportunities of society. It has sometimes been said that the art of conversation has declined, if it has not become

even totally lost. Certainly we have now no Dr. Johnson, with his attendant reporter; we have not even a Macaulay, a Sydney Smith, or a 'Conversation' Sharpe. But the number of persons who can talk well on a variety of subjects is enormously increased; and, *pace veterum*, we are happy enough to be able to believe that as good (or better) conversation is now to be had as in the time of the great extinct Megatheria and Leviathans of talk. The larger temptations and advantages of general society must therefore no doubt, be considered as having their share in rendering formal places of meeting for intellectual purposes less necessary than they may formerly have been. Yet, when it is remembered what crowds are often to be seen at the evening meetings of the Royal Institution, or of the Geographical Society, it can hardly be affirmed that such places have, in fact, lost any of their attractions.

During Brodie's second vacation in London, he attended Wilson's lectures at the School of Anatomy in Great Windmill-street. The London hospitals were not then sufficiently provided with the means of instruction, and much of it was then a matter of private enterprise and in private hands. All this time his professional studies were confined to anatomy, except that, by Dr. Baillie's advice; he attended in a chemist's shop, at the corner of Little Newport-street, in order to pick up some knowledge of the *Materia Medica* and the making up of prescriptions. It was kept by an old-fashioned apothecary, who afterwards rose to a higher sphere of practice; but Brodie speaks with respect of this class of practitioners, as being more within the reach of the poorer orders than the better educated but more ambitious gentlemen who have taken their place. His methods of treatment seem to have been simple enough. He had in the shop five large bottles, labelled *Mistura Salina*, *Mistura Cathartica*, *Mistura Astringens*, *Mistura Cinchonæ*, and another containing a white emulsion for coughs; and out of these he prescribed for two-thirds of his patients. On which Brodie observes, with all the sagacity of long experience, that whereas young medical men generally deal in a great variety of remedies, they come to discard them as they grow older, until they at last almost attain to the simple treatment practised by his old apothecary in Little Newport-street.

In the spring of 1803, Brodie became a pupil of Sir Everard Home's at St. George's Hospital, and so commenced his connection with that noble institution. The hospital work gave a new life to his studies. He had worked diligently before, but without much inter-

est in what he was doing, being at drill, as it were, on parade-ground, and learning only the technical names, the places, uses, and relations of the various parts and organs of the human body. Now, however, in the wards of the hospital, he was in the thick of the great fight of medical art with disease, and it was altogether a different affair. Like other battle-fields, he describes it as, at first, all confusion. Why one patient recovers and another dies; why the same treatment does not always succeed, and a multitude of other matters, is all inexplicable to the young student. Soon, however, an insight is gained into what is going on, and it is understood that 'a great game is being played, in which the stake is . . . the life or death of a fellow-creature.' It is a contest in which the youngest subaltern may very early begin to feel that he is of use in watching the fortunes of the fight, and in carrying out the commands of his chief, and is, nevertheless, not yet subjected to any painful sense of responsibility. The previous course of abstract drilling now tells, and the knowledge gained by it is daily brought into practical use, so to speak, in the face of the enemy.

In the winter of 1803-1804 Brodie continued his attendance at St George's and at the school in Great Windmill-street, where he was promoted to the function of giving the demonstration in the not unfrequent absence of one of the teachers. He contrived, with prudence, to live in London without drawing unduly on his father's means, and without once being in debt. Several of his friends added to their incomes by writing for the press; and some slight ventures of Brodie's in the same way were favourably received and printed in a long forgotten literary journal. It is an anecdote worth repeating, that Brodie never went to get the small sum earned by him in this manner. He says: 'I know not how it was that I never applied for the money. I found that I could not well follow two trades at the same time, and thus my literary adventures soon came to an end.' How many briefless junior barristers, and young medical men without patients, are now to be found who are capable of resisting similar temptations, and of sticking to the hard and dusty high road which leads to eminence, instead of lounging aside into the softer lanes of small literature, which lead to nothing?

In 1804 their father died suddenly, and there was some difficulty in maintaining the medical student and his legal brother in their respective positions in London.



but prudence and self-sacrifice did their work, and the necessary studies in Lincoln's Inn and St. George's suffered no interruption. Brodie now commenced the practice of taking written notes of cases, and dwells on the advantage he derived to the end of his professional life, by occasional reference even to the earliest of his note books. The benefit of an immediate reduction into writing of observations, while the facts are fresh in the memory, cannot be too much estimated. As Bacon has it: 'reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.' There is no profession in which the qualities of fulness, readiness, and exactness are of more capital value than that of medicine; but of the three, exactness is probably the one which stands most in need of early cultivation and subsequent diligent maintenance. The persons among whom he executes it are so little capable of forming a judgment of, or exercising any controlling criticism upon, a physician's work, that he is almost without a check or guide, unless he imposes it on himself by a regular and well-kept book of cases. It will be the log of his professional voyage. Assisted by its silent counsels, and with recollections refreshed by its steady witnessing, experience may best hope to attain to something like prophetic strain. Kept by the student, it will furnish the most rapid means of gaining accurate knowledge and confidence in the treatment of disease. Brodie congratulates himself on having pursued his own studies at a time when the modern (as he thinks) excessive attendance at lectures was not required, which leaves no sufficient opportunity for practical study in the wards of the hospital, or for the acquisition of knowledge in other ways. The number of hours spent daily in lecture-rooms, the competition for prizes, and the cramming for examinations, he considers as evils from which the young men of his own age were happily exempt. A similar change has now been going on for some time in the course of preparation to be pursued for other professions and intellectual employments. It will be curious to see whether some veteran lawyer, or public servant, writing his own memoirs within the next few years, may have occasion to make the same sort of remark upon the effects of excessive compulsory instruction, and of over-stimulated competition, upon the real working value to their clients and to the nation of the means adopted with the intention of improving the Bar and the Civil Service of the country. We trust it may not turn out that mischief is being done by the quantities

of cramming and examinations now made requisite in so many quarters; but we cannot help thinking there is some danger of it; and such a warning as that given by Brodie, in his own profession, ought not to pass altogether without heed.

After having filled the place of house-surgeon at St. George's, Brodie may be considered to have, in fact, completed his professional education, and to be ready for practice. He began by assisting Home in his private operations, but continued his attendance at the hospital, and as a teacher at the Great Windmill-street School, never forgetting the pursuit of the high scientific inquiries, which afford the best relief from the drudgery of daily work. In 1808 he was, at the comparatively early age of twenty-five, elected as assistant-surgeon at St. George's, and was the first to set the example of delivering clinical lectures in a London hospital, and, from particular circumstances, had a much greater charge of the patients thrown upon him than would usually belong to his position.

In 1810, Brodie became a member of the Royal Society, at that time under the presidency of Sir Joseph Banks, whose own scientific labours, and opportunities for hospitable entertainment, fitted him especially for the post. He used to assemble men of science during the winter season, every Sunday evening, at his house in Soho-square. There were also breakfasts and dinners, and, in the spring, pleasant gatherings at his country-house near Hounslow. The scientific world has now outgrown in numbers the facilities for enjoying this kind of society, and is, indeed, now subdivided to an extent which makes its organization very different from what it was when the Royal Society was the only association of the kind of any eminence.

By this time Brodie was fairly ready for practice; had taken a house in Sackville-street, and put his name on the door, and was making his modest £200 or £300 a year from private patients. He at this time belonged to a society called the 'Animal Chemistry Club,' which consisted of Home, Hatchett, Davy, Babington, Brande, Clift, Children, Warren, and himself. It seems to have been one of those delightful small societies in which the interest derived from a community of pursuit is heightened by social intercourse and uninterrupted friendship among its members. Some interesting biographical details of Brande and Clift occur in this part of the volume; and, in mentioning the unfortunate abandonment of anything like original investi-

gation in chemistry by Mr. Brande, during the middle and latter part of his career, Brodie takes occasion to notice how the prudential considerations forced upon the attention of a man with a family to be provided for, must interfere with his aspirations in this respect. Constant labour for remuneration which may not be renounced, must prevent any time being given to pursuits which are of a higher nature, but which produce no personal return except fame, and which pay no butchers' and bakers' bills. He adds: 'If Davy or Faraday had had large families to provide for, they would not have had sufficient leisure, nor sufficient freedom from anxiety, to distinguish themselves as they have done in the line of original research.' Davy, in the fullest blaze of his reputation, married a rich widow, and was then only thirty-four years old. All his greatest discoveries had been then made and announced. The safety-lamp came in 1815, and Davy lived for fourteen years after that, but did no more. There may, therefore, be too much wealth as well as too little; and it is true, as Sir Joseph Banks said to Hatchett the chemist when he inherited a good fortune, and ceased to work at chemistry, that 'being a gentleman of fortune is a confounded bad trade.'

Faraday lives (and long may he live to enjoy the repose he has so richly earned) beyond all precedent an example of the highest and noblest self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of science. Hardly another individual can be named whose discoveries, ranging as they do over so wide an extent of physics, have contributed so largely to 'the relief of man's estate.' Undertaken in the purest spirit of philosophical verity, they have in their consequences led to the greatest practical results, and, above all others, have justified the well-chosen motto — *Illustrans commoda vitæ* — of the Institution within whose laboratories they were made, and which still enjoys the privilege and honour of counting him as its chief prop and choicest ornament. Millions have received general benefit from the results of his researches, and thousands have found in them the opportunity for private gain; but Michael Faraday, the true centre of all this public advantage, and of all this private wealth, remains in worldly circumstances and in social station what he was — a man for his age and the world to be proud of, and leaving the nation to which he belongs no other excuse for this than the fact that no reward, and no artificial honours, could adequately rec-

ompense his services, or in any degree elevate his position.

There was another small society to which Brodie belonged, called the 'Society for the Promotion of Medical and Chirurgical Knowledge,' of which Dr. Wells, the author of the beautiful 'Essay on Dew,' was the secretary. Brodie mentions him as one of the most remarkable persons with whom it was his lot to become personally acquainted.

In 1811, and at the early age of twenty-eight, Brodie had the honour of receiving from the Royal Society, the Copley Medal, for two valuable physiological papers communicated by him. The subjects were, the influence of the nervous system in the production of animal heat, and on the effects of certain vegetable poisons; and in the following year he continued them in other papers. These, with other valuable memoirs, lectures, and notes of cases, are now published in Brodie's collected works.

A paper entitled 'Pathological Researches respecting the Diseases of Joints,' printed in 1813, in the transactions of the Medical and Chirurgical Society, was the foundation of the volume published by Brodie on the same subject some years afterwards — a book of great usefulness and repute.

The tide of fortune never ebbed with Brodie, and he gradually but surely rose into practice; never, however, neglecting the advantages open to him of enjoying good and agreeable society. A medical man, no less than a portrait-painter, should cultivate every opportunity he can of seeing those with whom he is or may be in professional contact, in their hours of ease and enjoyment. Knowledge of character and temperament is no small item in their stock of information; and the physician or painter who only sees his clients in sickness or before the easel, will lose many valuable means of exercising his art to the greatest advantage. For many years he was frequently at Holland House, and gratefully acknowledges his obligations to the host and hostess of that well-known and often-praised centre of social and intellectual recreation.

In 1816 Brodie married a daughter of Sergeant Sellon, and he mentions that at this time his professional income from fees and lectures amounted to £1530 a year. In 1819 he moved to Savile Row, the headquarters of surgical eminence in London, and in that year his income increased by a thousand pounds. He attributes this improvement to the publication of the first edition of his *Diseases of the Joints* and also to the occurrence of some want of confi-

dence in Sir Astley Cooper, which left an opening in practice which he was ready to fill. From this time Brodie's position was one of ascertained success, and he had no longer cause for any further anxiety on his prospects. In addition to increasing labours in the ordinary course of a successful surgeon's career, Brodie now received the honourable distinction of being appointed to the Professorship of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology in the College of Surgeons, which he held for four years.

In 1821 Brodie was first called in to attend the King; and two years afterwards he mentions his whole professional income as amounting to £6500. It continued to increase, and by 1834, the annual produce of his accumulated savings amounted to £2000 or £2500.

In that year the great surgeon was made a baronet—a dignity for which he does not appear to have been very anxious, as not adding greatly to his own importance, and because he seems to have doubted whether his permanent means at that time were sufficient for the future support of hereditary rank in his family. He describes it to have been the wish of his life to retire early from professional practice and renew his former scientific pursuits. But this was frustrated by the elevation which made continued professional exertion necessary for the fitter endowment of the baronetcy. And thus it is, that 'fortune never comes with both hands full.'

In 1840 Brodie resigned the office of surgeon at St. George's, after having held it for nearly eighteen years, and that of assistant-surgeon for fourteen years, making together a period of thirty-two years of connection with the hospital. He had in 1837 become possessed of the property near Dorking, which was to be the place of retirement for his later days.

Of the events of Sir Benjamin's life subsequent to the period covered by his autobiography, the most noticeable are, that in 1856 he received an honorary degree from the university of Oxford. In 1858, on the death of Lord Wrottesley he was elected President of the Royal Society. Three physicians, namely Sir Hans Sloane, Sir John Pringle, and Dr. Wollaston, had filled the chair of the oldest and foremost philosophical society of England, but Brodie was the first surgeon chosen for this honour. He was the first President of the Medical Council under the Act to regulate the medical and surgical professions. Every circumstance of external distinction and general private respect attended him to

the end of his long and useful career. No man, indeed, has done more to elevate the character of the profession to which he belonged than Brodie. He advanced the moral tone, and raised the scientific pretensions of the upright and educated practitioner, and did good service in the exposure of quack and quackery. In the very last year of his life he contributed to this magazine a paper on Homœopathy, displaying all the sagacity and good sense for which he was remarkable. He died full of years and honours on the 21st October, 1862.

In conclusion, we have permission to avail ourselves of the diary of a lady, which contains an entry of a meeting with Brodie, probably on one of the very last occasions that he was out in general company. It shows how interesting his talk could be, and contains some opinions which are well worth recording.

Sat at dinner next Sir Benjamin Brodie. Some general conversation on works of fiction led him into reflections upon the high uses and influences of the imagination; and he said he thought this faculty was too much neglected in education, and ought not merely to be tolerated, but should be cultivated in youth. Hardly any other mental force, he said, was complete without its assistance. Yet it was a usual plan in parental and in school discipline to attempt to cramp its growth. It ought, on the contrary, to be freely encouraged and exercised; and the best way to avoid aberrations and disease, was to give it wholesome nutriment, avoiding, of course, injudicious stimulants. He would give a child fairy tales, which its mind was fitted to receive; not smatterings of science, which made childhood merely pedantic. A child's mind would expand in the boldest inventions of fairy-land; and these would throw a kind of halo over the after life, in which there was sure to be always enough of the prosaic. The imaginative powers would grow with these conceptions, and childhood was a period which nature favoured for such a growth. The over charging of the memory with an accumulation of facts which the mind was incapable of understanding, was a process injurious to its development. He said he had been himself, from his earliest days, and still was, an ardent reader of works of fiction; and he challenged me to compete with him in a knowledge of the novels and romances of the past and present generation. We ran an even race till we came to Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, among which he counted *Athelny and Dunbane*. I did not think it was by Mrs. Radcliffe. I believed it was written by Charlotte Smith. He was sure it was Mrs. Radcliffe's, I was equally positive for Charlotte Smith. Neither of us could give way on the point. Finally we made a bet of a silver threepence, to be decided by reference to

the circulating libraries and the biographies of the two ladies in question.

Before we parted, I mentioned to Sir Benjamin that I was suffering from sleepless nights, and asked if there was any remedy for this. He said the best was open air with exercise. He doubted whether there was any other; the nerves gained vigour in an out-of-door life, and nature would give the relief of sleep to the body when sufficiently fatigued by exercise. He had known a remarkable case of a young man of fortune who in his prosperous days was restless and sleepless. He ran through his fortune, and reduced to the last shift for a livelihood, became a stone-breaker on the roads. In this condition he was recognized by some of his former acquaintances. They were great-

ly shocked, and combined to subscribe a sum of money enough to relieve him from present necessity, and went to him with this free offering, and suggestions for a different mode of life. But he declined the gift, saying—'Thank you; I am happy and healthy now. I sleep all night, and I am happy all day; and I prefer to stay as I am.'

'This,' said Brodie, 'sounds rather like a moral tale out of my store of fiction, but it is a fact within the sphere of my actual knowledge.' When he wished me 'good-night,' he added, 'Mrs. Radcliffe,' and I replied with 'Charlotte Smith.'

Investigation proved him to be in the right, and I duly forwarded to him my threepenny bit and apology.

#### THE GREAT GRANDSON OF JOHN JAY.

[We have always rejoiced in remembering, and causing our readers to think of, the life and character of John Jay, the man who enjoyed the perfect confidence of Gen. Washington. And it is as a tribute to the memory of the great head of his family, that we copy from the *Army and Navy Journal* a notice of his descendant of the fourth generation. An unspotted genealogy.]

LIEUTENANT-Colonel WILLIAM JAY, of Bedford, N. Y., late of the Headquarters Staff of the Army of the Potomac, resigned his position after the closing review at Washington. Colonel JAY, who, at the outbreak of the Rebellion, was about completing his studies in the Law School of Columbia College, was in April, 1861, appointed by Major-General JOHN E. WOOL a volunteer aide. In August of the same year he was commissioned by President LINCOLN under the act of Congress authorizing "additional aide-de-camps," and was the first officer of that corps with the rank of Captain—the next appointed, in September, having been Captain LOUIS PHILIPPE D'ORLEANS, Comte de Paris, and Captain ROBERT D'ORLEANS, Duc de Chartres, whose gallant services under General McCLELLAN have an historic significance. Captain JAY was assigned successively by the War Department to the staffs of Major-Generals WOOL, GEORGE W. MORRELL, and GEORGE G. MEADE, and served under the last named commander, then in charge of the Fifth corps, at Chancellorsville. When General MEADE became Command-

er-in-Chief of the Army of the Potomac, Captain JAY was temporarily assigned to the staff of Major-General GEORGE SYKES, at the request of that officer, who succeeded to the command of the Fifth corps, then famous for its force of Regulars, and served with him at Gettysburgh and other battles to the close of the Mine Run campaign. Recalled to the staff of the Commanding General in April, 1864, he continued with General MEADE throughout the memorable campaign that commenced with the crossing of the Rapidan and ended with the surrender of LEE. The conferring of brevets having been authorized by Congress in 1864, Captain JAY was in that year brevetted Major by President LINCOLN for his conduct in the field; and again, on the 15th June, 1865, by President JOHNSON, Lieutenant-Colonel, to rank from the 9th of April, "for gallant and meritorious services during the recent operations resulting in the fall of Richmond and the surrender of the insurgent army under General ROBERT E. LEE." Major-General MEADE, in addressing the War Department on the 25th May, 1865, after approving of Colonel JAY's resignation, added—"I deem it due to this officer's distinguished services to express officially my approbation of his gallantry and zeal, and the intelligence he has ever displayed since being under my command." Colonel JAY is a son of JOHN JAY, Esq., of New York, and a grandson and name-sake of the late Judge WILLIAM JAY.